Temple Arts of Kerala

Ronald M. Bernier

Temple Arts of Kerala

Ronald M. Bernier

TEMPLE ARTS OF KERALA

Wall patterns of Tirunakkara Śiva Temple, Kottayam District.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

Temple Arts of Kerala

A South Indian Tradition

Ronald M. Bernier

S. Chand & Company Ltd
Ram Nagar, New Delhi– 110055

The history that can be seen and touched
is a strong and stimulating soul-food

W.R. Lethaby

Preface

Having come to the subject of Kerala temple art after many years of giving attention to Himalayan traditions, I found very little to absolutely link distant northern and southern monuments except through broad South Asian themes that are shared by both. The 19th century suggestion of James Fergusson that there is a special connection between the two developments proved to be unsupported by analysis of structure, ornament, and meaning. However, the temples of Kerala revealed themselves to be so important in their own right, so refined and so vibrant, that it became a source of much intrigue and satisfaction to study their evolution. The following chapters are the product of visits to all Kerala districts, use of the extensive archives that are kept at the University of Kerala and the University of Calicut, and the shared knowledge of Kerala authorities. A selection of monuments had been made according to my own preferences, degree of accessibility, and availability of both primary and secondary research sources.

Essential aid in undertaking the project was given by H. Sarkar and K.V. Soundara Rajan, both of the Archaeological Survey of India offices in New Delhi. Their own publications provided important groundwork for my study, and served as constant reference throughout. I do not seek to expand upon or duplicate their work with archaeological and epigraphical material, but rather to compliment it with the concerns of my own field, Art History. The Archaeological Survey and Temple Survey Project offices in Madras and in Cochin have been very generous, and contact with the Kerala State Department of Archaeology was essential at every stage of research during my three most recent visits to Kerala. And for support of the project as a whole I am very grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the University of Colorado, the Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research program, and the United States Educational Foundation in India.

The Department of Museums and Zoos in Trivandrum has been especially encouraging, and formal sponsorship by the Department of History, University of Kerala, made completion of this book possible. The History faculty in Calicut also offered valuable ideas and interpretation, and this project could not have begun without the invaluable help of K.J. John, archaeologist in that department. The work became a joy through the friendship and aid of S.P. Tampi of the State Department of Archaeology in Trivandrum.

Other scholars whose work and counsel are invaluable include A. Sreedhara Menon, D. Appukuttan Nair, Stella Kramrisch, and N.V. Mallayya, along with the late authorities R.V. Poduval and J.H. Cousins. The temple arts that they recognized to be unique remain sheltered and often little-known. It is hoped that this volume and others to come will continue to bring Kerala temple art the fame

that it deserves. Although small in scale, even "humble", the sacred buildings reveal riches of many kinds. Above all, they are holy, and I value the sensitive analysis of devotees such as Shivasankaran Nair.

These introductory words must conclude with thanks to the person who has been part of every project and every paragraph, sharing each discovery: Dianne, my wife.

1 January 1981
Department of Fine Arts
University of Colorado, U.S.A.

RONALD M. BERNIER

List of Illustrations

List of Drawings and Plans

Color Illustrations

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

Kerala Observed

THE REMARKABLE GEOGRAPHICAL identity that belongs to the state of Kerala, as a ribbon of land along the Arabian Sea at the southern end of the Indian sub-continent, has religious implication. Legend recounts that Kerala was lifted from the sea, set apart and blessed, by Parasurama, Rāma with the Axe.[1] The deity threw his *parasu* or axe across the waters between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari to define the land of Kerala, also called Bhārgavaksetram or Parasurāmaksetram in Brāhmanical tradition. The event is recorded in the *Raghuvamsa* (Chapter IV, Verse 53), in the Tiruvalangadu plates of King Rajendra Chola (1012–1044), and in countless folk tales. As discussed by A. Sreedhara Menon, the story is "enshrined" locally in the *Keralolpathi* that was compiled in Malayālam language during the 18th or 19th century.[2] It is known to everyone. The land is believed to receive divine protection to the present day from Sāstā (Ayyappan) and the goddess Bhagavati. Sāstā is Hari-Hara Putra, born of the union of Siva and Visnu in beautiful female form as Mohini-rupa, an encounter that is portrayed in a Mattancheri Palace painting. Sometimes he is considered to be a Hinduized version of Buddha. He guards the mountains that are the southern extremity of the Western Ghats and a wall between Kerala and interior India. His major temples are Ariyankāvu, Achenkovil, Kulathupuzha, Sabarimala, and Kanthamala. The shore is protected by Bhagavatl from such famous shrines as Matāi-kavu, Lokanār-kavu, Tiruvalayanad-kāvu, Tirumānthānkunnatu-kāvu, Pazhayannūr-kāvu, Chottanikkara-kāvu, Chertalak-kāvu, and Attingal where she is the family deity of the Travancore *mahārājas*. Temples of the two guardians are to be found throughout the heights and lowlands. Between them is wedged a 360-mile long stretch of sacred land, over 15,000 square miles in area, that is now largely Hindu but which still reveals crosscurrents of other religious influences.

PLATES 1, 2

PLATES 3, 4

Brahmanical dominance of Kerala religion is so well established today that it is easy to overlook the historical status of Jainism and Buddhism in early times. And Christianity, like Islam, is a long established and expanding entity here. All of these are underlain by animistic beginnings. Their growth may be traced in terms of temple monuments. For example, the great Jaina/Buddhist temple of Srimūlavāsam is recorded in a land grant record of King Vikramāditya Varaguna (c. 800–925 A.D.) with an invocation to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The same *vihara* temple is recorded to have been saved from the encroaching sea by

King Vikramarāma of the Mūshika Dynasty in the 10th century. It was also patronized by King Valabha around 1000 A.D. According to the *Mūshikavaṁśa* of Atula, Chapter XII, Verses 16–18 :

> Once, during the reign of King Vikramarāma, the famous shrine at Mūlavāsa dedicated to Jina—the refuge where the misfortunes of people are destroyed and which was the paragon of beauty—was threatened by the sea. The tumultuous waves leapt into the shore gaping open their folds as if to devour it. Hearing the disturbing news and considering it an offence by his nearby enemy, Vikramarāma rushed toward the ocean flashing his sword; the valiant consider nothing beyond them. He checked the momentum of the flood by constructing a dyke with huge blocks of stone looking like fragments of dark clouds and prevented the surge of the sea which roared as if the deluge was on.

Canto XIV, Stanzas 25–26 goes on to record that:

> On his way back Vaḷabha visited the shrine located at the holy Mūlavāsa and dedicated to Sugata (Buddha), the most compassionate among immortals, the ever-lasting and abundant treasure-house of Dharma and worshipped him. Receiving the blessings coupled with the cheers of victory from the Jaina monks, he returned to his capital seized by his adversary. [5]

A network of Jaina centers existed from the 9th/10th centuries into the 16th century from Kerala into Mysore, and it supported not only Hoyśala and Cāḷukya exchange but contacts with the Nāyaka Dynasty on the opposite coast. Jaina rock-cut shrines exist from at least as early as the 9th century, although most have been converted to honor Bhagavatī. The faith thrived with support from the early Chera and Āy dynasties in times before this, but it enjoyed fluorescence along with re-emerging Āy political force in the 9th century. The Kollam Era (Malayālam Era) begins in 825 A.D., and at that time Tirukkaṇāva temple near the Chera capital was an important Jaina site. K. G. Krishnan has identified it with the ruins of Gopapuram near Alathur in Palghat District. [6] Like many of the caves, the temple locale is now associated with Bhagavati, and its two Jaina images have been placed in the Trichur Museum. Also to be noted is the Jaina temple of Tiruchanattumala that probably dates to the 10th century. Late Jaina sculptures of note include 16th century works at Nagerkoil in Kanyakumari District, which had a functioning Jaina temple until 1522, and Jaina settlements still survive at Kalpatta and Manantoddy in Kozhikode District and elsewhere in Kerala.

William Logan traces Jaina patterns in the architecture of mosques and temples into the twentieth century, and Buddha images in the Trivandrum Museum are clearly part of the total development of Kerala sculpture. But above all, the 9th and 10th centuries of Kulaśekhara rule, often called a "Golden Age," are times of expanding Hinduism. It is an age that gave impetus for the creation of many if not most of the monuments that are treated in this study, with the Siva temple at Kandiyur as a fine example that is dated 823 A.D. War between the Cheras and the Choḷas brought a sudden interruption to temple projects.

Christian impact on Kerala comes early, legend tracing the introduction of Christianity to St. Thomas the Apostle in 52 A.D. Several Christian denomina-

PLATE 5

tions and sects flourish today and their monuments, from medieval times forward, will be studied as part of the work of the newly established Indian Institute of Christian Studies at Archana near Calicut University. The architecture is particularly bold in both its intense polychrome and its emphasis upon clean geometric form, with the red and silver Roman Catholic Cathedral in Calicut as an example. In terms of structure, painting, and sculpture, churches of Kerala are integral with the evolution of temple and palace design.

Jewish settlement, now mainly centered in Cochin, is traced to about the 1st century A.D., but contact may have begun as early as the 10th century B.C. and the age of King Solomon, whose palace may have been decked with Malabar gold. Jewish presence had great political and economic as well as religious importance and Jewish alliance with Kerala kings was often crucial to royal survival. Cranganore is the most often noted settlement of Jews historically, but the most important document in their South Indian history is that of the famous copper plates of King Bhaskara Ravivarman I (962–1019 A.D.), issued in 1000 A.D. at the capital city of Mahodayapuram. As royal gift to the Jewish Chief Joseph Rabban, they read:

> Hail, and Prosperity! The following gift was graciously made by him who had assumed the title of King of Kings, His Majesty the King Sri Parkaran Iravi Vanmar, whose ancestors have been wielding the sceptre for many hundred thousand years, in the thirty-sixth year after the second year, on the day on which he dwelt in Muriricote, was pleased to make the following gifts: We have granted to Joseph Rabban the village of Anjuvannam together with the seventy-two proprietary rights, tolls on boats and carts, the revenue and the title of Anjuvannam, the lamp of the day, a cloth spread in front to walk on, a palanquin, a parasole, a Vaduga (i.e. Telugu) drum, trumpet, a gateway, a garland, decoration with festoons, and so forth. We have granted him the land tax and weight tax; moreover we have sanctioned with these copper plates that he need not pay the dues which the inhabitants of the other cities pay the Royal Palace, and that he may enjoy the benefits which they enjoy. To Joseph Rabban the Prince of Anjuvannam and to his descendants, sons and daughters, and to his nephews, and to the sons-in-law who married his daughters in natural succession, so long as the world and moon exist Anjuvannam shall be his hereditary possession..

With the establishment of the state of Israel, most of the Jewish population of Kerala moved on. But several synagogue structures remain as memory of their long residence on the Malabar Coast. With its floor covered by Dutch tiles and its crystal chandeliers, the Synagogue of the White Jews beside the Mattancheri Palace in Cochin, built in 1567, is one of the most "international" monuments in the state.

Western historical records help to map what Stanley J. O'Connor terms the great "trackless sea" of Asian trade, an ongoing exchange that is basic to the growth of Kerala culture. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* refers to Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) in about the 1st century A.D., whereas the earliest Indian records are the references to "Keralaputra" in the second and thirteenth edicts of Asoka in 257 B.C. Ptolemy writes of Karoura (Karur) or Vanji near Cranganore as coastal capital in the 2nd century A.D., following after Pliny and his reference to

Calobotras as ruler of Kerala in the 1st century A.D. with his capital at Muziris, which may be present-day Cranganore.[8] A. Sreedhara Menon cautiously refers to the *Peutingerian Tables* as a set of maps said to have been copied from the fresco paintings in Rome about 226 A.D. and "cited as evidence of the alleged existence of a temple of Augustus near Miziris and of a regular Roman army being stationed in the town for the protection of Roman commerce." He also notes that the most important European writer after Ptolemy is the Byzantine monk, Cosmas Indicopleustus of the 6th century A.D. who writes of the town of Quilon, possibly Male, and gives the first concrete record of Christian activity in Kerala in his *Topographia Indika Christiana.*[9]

Spices were the most important trade goods from ancient Kerala and it is relevant to reconstruct the passage of cinnamon, for example, from southern India to the Middle East through Arab commercial contacts. Menon even proposes that a direct overland route may have linked Kerala to the Middle East by way of the Indus Valley at the earliest times of Indian civilization. Referring to Phoenician as well as Arab trade, he notes that a fleet of ships sponsored by King Solomon and manned by Phoenicians "came to Ophir and fetched from thence gold," and that Ophir has been identified variously with Puvar in Trivandrum District and Beypore in Kozhikode District.[10]

Islam came with trade and it continues to thrive, especially in the northern districts of Kozhikode and Malappuram. The Arab merchant Sulaiman may have visited Kerala in 851 A.D., or his account may be based upon secondary sources as he writes, "I know not that there is anyone of either nation (Chinese or Indian) that has embraced Muhammadanism or speaks Arabic."[11] Cranganore and the site of Cheràman Malik Manzil became the location of the first mosque,[12] however, and today Muslims are the third largest population of the state, after Hindus and Christians. Islamic architecture in Calicut city (Kozhikode) is rich and varied, with massive proportions and successful exploitation of Kerala woodcarving art in a visual tradition without images. Noteworthy monuments in Calicut alone include Shekkinte Palli, Elante Palli, Muccunti Palli, Jama Palli, and the very large and impressive Mithqal Palli that is covered by five roofs of tile.

PLATES 6 7

Kublai Khan had diplomatic relations with the king of Quilon in the 13th century, but intercourse with China and the East began much earlier. Pepper and other spices brought Chinese trade, probably at about the same time as that of the Romans or even earlier, with the South Indian find of a Chinese coin from the 1st century B.C. at Chandravalli.[13] While Hsuan Tsang did not visit Kerala in his travels of the 7th century, later travellers from China did leave important accounts of their experiences in the south. Among them are the 15th century records of Ma Huan.

A Portuguese fort was built at Cranganore in 1523. These visitors were followed by the Dutch, French, and British with tremendous effect on all stages of life, with the possible exception of orthodox religion. Borrowing was never wholesale, so that traditions of church, synagogue, and mosque architecture show

continuous local invention. Mention of such monuments can be little more than a footnote to this study, and they are in need of extensive research as separate subjects. The topic of temple architecture is rich in monuments and very complex in historical and stylistic development. The following pages treat many structures that occur in many periods of time to house a very large family of gods. The temples grow from the land and reach for the heavens.

CHAPTER TWO

Houses of the Land—Construction, Ceremony, Use

THE BEST ROUTE toward understanding Kerala's sacred architecture is through study of domestic buildings like Nalukettu and Ettukettu houses of the local Nair community. These are made according to *Vāstu Sāstra* rules of mud-rock, stone, wood, and thatch or tiles, and in this they relate to temples. The temple is essentially a sacred house made to shelter one or more divine inhabitants. Structural methods are continuous for both building types, and their overall organization of space is very much the same. They present what Stella Kramrisch calls "purely Kerala shapes" in their high sloping roofs and angular silhouettes.

A collapsing house near Vilinjam and Kovalam in Trivandrum District represents the kind of simple, logical, and practical construction of domestic buildings that is multiplied, projected, and adorned to become temple architecture. Its double-hipped roof is steeply pitched, with beams fanning out from a ridge pole as central spine and pierced gables for ventilation under the roof at either end. Gables, often with four interior columns called *upa stambha,* are a hallmark of both domestic and sacred architecture. They occur on mosques and palaces as well. As explained by Clifford Reis Jones, they vary from the right-angle or pent-shape that is more common, with its bargeboards called *nipraphalaka,* to curving shapes of the true *kūṭa* or *gavākṣa* type. All are commonly called *nāsikā,* "nose." [14]

PLATE 8

A deeply projecting roof overhang is typical at Vilinjam, to carry water away from the protected walls and to shelter an open verandah and passage around the base of the house. A subsidiary building is joined to the house by a covered passageway, and a kind of compound is defined all around the complex by a shoulder-high wall of mud-rock. In addition, the house is situated in a lush garden with fields and orchards beyond. The house is built mainly of wood on a foundation of stone and its wooden superstructure is covered with baked clay tiles. The doors are made of wood.

Decorative parts are found in the fine pattern of gable piercings, lightly scalloped railing designs on the verandah, floral and geometric carvings on the roof-supporting pillars. A running cornice design of minute angular projections is carved around the building at verandah level. The structure is relatively plain and uncluttered, but its surfaces are softened by finely worked embellishments. Houses

are built by various artisans including craftsman-architects of the Śūdra caste while temple manufacture is overseen by a *sūtradhāra* or architect-scholar who is usually a Brāhmaṇ. Temple theatres are also designed and built under Brāhman guidance.[15]

Among dwelling designs in Kerala, indigenous Nair family compounds are especially related to temple organization and design. These large buildings represent environmental architecture in its fullest South Indian development. A typical assembly of structures for Nair use encloses a rectangular ground space that is fully cultivated while having a well and a large bathing tank. The pattern is considered here in some detail because of the special interrelationship of temple design and Nair architecture as well as the effect of Nair domestic patterns upon royal and Brāhmaṇical dwellings.[16] A fine example is the ancestral home of Shivasankaran Nair in Kottayam, with the carved gable of its main building dated 1087 Malayālam Era (1912 A.D.).

PLATE 9

Directions for the proper construction of houses are given in treatises such as the *Vāstuvidyā* (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, No. CXLII), the *Śilparatna of Śrī Kumāra* (*Trivandrum Sanskrit Series*, No. XCVIII), and others so that, even though the ideal is probably never fully realized, institutionalized measures of correctness and quality are recognized throughout Kerala. They are continuous with requirements of the *Tantrasamuchchaya* and other works on temple architecture. Such measures or rules include that the most propitious slope of ground for construction is toward the east, and that a location to the left of a Śāstā temple will bring prosperity. Classification of house types is very complex,[17] and each is defined by its circumambit or distance around which is measured in units called *kol*, with one *kol* equal to 28¼ inches. A *kol* is divided into 24 *viral* units, with one *viral* being slightly less than 1¼ inches. A *dandu* as a larger measure equals four *kols*.

Measurements have auspicious or dangerous connotations, so that buildings of 17 to 19 *kols* circumambit, for example, should be avoided lest their inhabitants die. Numbers of over 19 through 25 *kols* are acceptable, but 26 is again an undesirable number. From more than 26 *kols* up to 33 *kols*, 16 *virals* are numbers deemed safe but measures up to 37 *kols*, 16 *virals* are again dangerous, and so on. In terms of time, construction may take place in the month of Edavam (May/June) for it will bring "money and jewels" to the patron, while building in Mithunam (June/July) brings death. And so every month and season has its attributed qualities that are passed on to constructions.

Through the records of K.P. Padmanabha Menon a standard Malayāli house plan of the kind that is now fast disappearing may be described here, with its total size measuring 64 *kols* from east to west and 64 *kols* from north to south, for a total area of 4096 square *kols* (256 square *dandus*). The main building in the compound measures 40 *kols*, 8 *virals* around. It is located in the northeastern quadrant or *koṇu* of the large square plot that is divided equally into four squares before construction begins. This largest building is used by females,[18] with a second dwelling place reserved for males, normally in the southeastern quadrant. The

kitchen occupies a separate structure 23 *kols,* 16 *virals* in circumambit and located just north of the women's building. A large gate-house provides entry to the northeastern quarter, with its well and large tank.

A third dwelling building occupies the northern part of the southeastern quarter, and a fourth is in the southwestern section not far from a shed for cows and a latrine building. An additional structure in the large compound is an *urappura* or place for pounding rice paddy. It is found in the northern part of the northeast quadrant.

Construction is forbidden in two sections of the compound. These are the *vayu khandan* portion as the lower half of the diagonally divided northwest square and the corresponding section of the southeast quarter. The latter is used as a cremation ground for the family dead.

Quarters are delineated and subdivided by the carpenter/architect as he cuts the original plot into four equal squares, and then sections them by drawing diagonal lines from corner to corner of the plot. The *maṇḍala*-like diagram is sacred in meaning and measure from the very first step of its creation. Its higher reference becomes most clear in the ceremonial procedures that follow the final phases of building.

When the structures stand completed, the rite of Vāstu Bali, also termed Kutti Pūjā, takes place to honor Vāstu as patron god of builders who is believed to choose the sites and to direct the activities of the builders. As Menon explains, he is described as sleeping on the earth with his head to the southwest and his feet to the northeast, and at concluding ceremonials his figure is drawn in this position on the northeast side of a room in the northeast portion of a new building. The ground upon which the figure lies is divided into 53 parts and each part is marked in a different color to represent a separate deity, with names there inscribed. A seat is placed at the spot for Ganapati (Gaṇesa) and a lamp is put down at its west side. Bhagavati is represented by a seat supporting a curved sword. Both gods are invoked with *mantras*, as are numerous Vāstu deities who receive offerings of pots filled with rice and covered with coconuts. To the main figure of Vāstu himself figures of a fish and a tortoise made of silver or gold are presented and the body is covered with red cloth. *Mantras* are recited in further propitiation. After more gift giving, carpenters move through every room of the house carrying burning torches into which they toss resin to make bursts of flame that drive out evil spirits. This is also done outside of and around the building.

Guardians of the eight directions—usually Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirurti, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera, and Rudra—are honored with rice and a plantain leaf with lighted wick when the house is finished. In honor of the powerful and dangerous Bhadra Kāli, a figure of nine equal parts is drawn in front of the main door with the ashes of a burned plantain stem, and a plantain tree is planted at its center, complete with its bunch of fruits. Also placed here is a twig of the Pāla milk tree. The whole plot of honored earth is decorated with coconut leaves. The

master carpenter stands to the south side of this, facing north, and he puts down a plantain leaf with which he traces a mystic syllable before he sacrifices a cock or goat and offers its blood to Raktesvarī, the goddess of blood. It might be noted that such offering in temples has been generally restricted since the passage of the Travancore-Cochin Animal and Birds Sacrifice Prohibition Act of 1953. [19] The geometric pattern of offering has an everyday counterpart in *kolam* designs drawn with rice powder on the floors of Hindu houses to invoke blessings upon the inhabitants. V. Nagam Aiya states that the *kolam* is to the Bhadra Kālī pattern as line drawing is to painting. [20]

Ceremony comes to an end as the carpenters go to a place outside of the house compound called *purakkalam* where they sacrifice goats and cocks along with a substance called *guruti* that is a mixture of turmeric and chunam made to represent blood. This takes place in the dead of night. The procedure may be considered together with the sacrifice of Raktesvarī to indicate the Tāntric direction of the rites as a whole. Finally, on the next day a ceremony called Tachuṭa or Tachelppu is performed so that the builders may call upon themselves any faults that exist in the new construction. A feast of celebration ends the blessing of the house. [21]

Houses that are made for Nambūtiri Brāhmans are similar in most ways to those of the Nairs, being somewhat more compact and less garden-oriented. The similarity is not surprising in view of the social alliance that has traditionally linked these groups, whereby the eldest son of a Nambūtiri family married into his own caste while any younger brothers allied with Nair women, leaving many Brāhmaṇ women without husbands. Both patron groups recognize various trees as bringing prosperity, and these are among shared features of their domestic compounds. Jackfruit, coconut, and the dramatically vertical areca palm are prescribed to be grown anywhere, but certain other trees should be planted only in particular directions within garden boundaries. The east is honored by Elanji *(Mimisopo elangi)* and Peral *(Ficus indica)* trees. The south should be planted with Atti *(Ficus racemosa)* and Puli *(Tamarindus indicus)* while the north is suited to the Nāga tree *(Tricosanthus anguina)* and Itti *(Ficus venosa)*. The west is noted for Arayal *(Ficus religiosa)* and Pala or milk plant *(Asclepius anguina)*. Along with directional significance of trees there is the remarkable emphasis on special groves called *kavu* or *sarpakavu* as shelter for snakes.

PLATE 10

Groves of trees exist as domestic places of "serpent worship" in a broad sense, shelters that honor the land and its protective spirits along with respect for and sacrifice to snakes by Nairs as well as Nambūtiris. These localized customs harmonize well with broad Kerala themes of honoring *nāga* spirits as divine serpents. Snakestones are small sculptural images that are often found in large numbers on the grounds of temples, some having been placed there in hopes of securing offspring for childless women. A few major temples are themselves dedicated to *nāgas* as central or subsidiary deities, including the renowned temple

PLATE 11

of Mannarasala in Alleppey District and Vettikode temple in Quilon District with its reputed 30,000 snake images.[22] They are an integral part of the pan-Indian tradition of which Heinrich Zimmer explains, "One cannot doubt either that the nāga was known in India in pre-Aryan times or that a continuous tradition communicated its image from the archaic to the medieval period," [23] and the reverence for snakes in Kerala may well be taken as a survival of ancient animism. Honored reptiles have long been an accepted part of the domestic scene and stories abound of mild-mannered ladies of the house who are solicitous, even affectionate, toward their quiet and often dangerous neighbours in the garden. With increasing urbanization the number of *kavu* serpent groves is steadily decreasing. And these are times of a major social shifting away from extended matrilineal households towards nuclear family dwellings of much smaller size.

The most important interior space of a Malayāli house is a formal shrine room that has its own works of art, normally including an image made of wood or metal. The main material of the enclosure is hardwood, as discussed in a following section, and the room is of modest size and quite dark. A simple altar with its image receives daily *pūjā* worship, as is typical throughout India. The small door is usually double, and carved with decorative floral and geometric borders as well as an occasional miniature representation of a deity, carved on the lintel for example. The inner ceiling may be ornamented with lotus patterns or other subdued designs. The room itself does not normally open to the compound grounds but rather into a small courtyard. This is part of a large building that is used for dwelling place and storage rooms. The courtyard functions as light well and impluvium depression; it is a work space as it provides an essential source of light and ventilation to the building as a whole. Thus the building in total relates to countless varieties of four-sided structures of *catuśāla* type, thousands of years old in India, but with indigenous elements. Kerala domestic compounds themselves open toward the center with their many buildings as if the garden space, too, were a courtyard.

PLATE 12

Kerala houses are open both physically and in terms of social movement. A series of verandahs and sitting rooms multiply inward, from an outer porch that is used by casual visitors toward inner rooms that are reserved for family members. The total compound is an inviting and pleasant place, for the extensive use of open porches and airy, spaciously separated structures amid planted grounds with permanent water sources makes Kerala dwellings the finest examples of domestic "garden architecture" in all of India.

Dwelling compounds are surrounded by wooden fences or mud-rock walls with thatch coverings that are renewed yearly, reflecting the enclosure patterns at temples. Gateway structures, mentioned previously, are called *padippura.* They are large in size and covered over in the same way. Also so roofed is the element called *kulappura* which may be present as a cool shed or canopy over steps that lead

down into a bathing tank. All of these make up a kind of frame for the houses themselves.

After passing through the garden and upon entering the main house of a Kerala family compound, by way of a double door that can be secured with a large lock, a visitor reaches a *chavadi* or antechamber with an open hall at the south end and an ornamental plank ceiling above. The northern end is likely to have a comfortable room about 10 feet square, and both spaces off of the *chavadi* are used by the Karanavam or family head to receive visitors.[24] Ideally, every Malayāli house has a special room where a Brāhman visitor can be housed and fed, set apart because of his special status. Due to its complexity of spaces, its greenery, and its "free scope for light and air" the Kerala house has been judged to be far superior to dwellings on the east coast of India,[25] and it may certainly be considered a healthy environment for living. It was the stronghold of the Marumakkathayam matrilineal system of Kerala society into the 20th century, but today that life pattern, like the traditional house type, is becoming increasingly rare. Finally, the rather poignant words of address by R.S. Lepper, Professor of History, to students of the Law College Association in Trivandrum soon after the turn of the century may be quoted:

> It is very much to be regretted that in the building of houses in Travancore beautifully carved wooden work is being replaced by ugly and commonplace gables of cement and tiles. It is hoped that the educated classes will try to arrest the dying out of the old art . . .[26]

Chapter Three

Geography and Materials

In 1908 the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* gave considerable attention to the term Malabar (Malayālam: "land of the hills") as the ancient name for Kerala. The name is said to have been taken from an Arabic source, with the termination "bar" meaning "country," [27] but other suggestions of origin are also made. Geographical identity is much more definable, with the Ghāts forming a long wall at the eastern boundary of what was Malabar/Cochin/Travancore and is now Kerala, ranging in elevation from 3000 to 8000 feet. The mountain wall is interrupted only at the 16 mile-wide Palghat Gap in Wynaad Taluk where a plateau at 3000 feet extends into the Mysore tableland and provides an invasion route into Kerala. Attapādi Valley and Silent Valley are noteworthy features of the highlands, as is the hilly region that is now set aside as the Periyar Game Sanctuary. The most prominent Peak is the 7600-foot Vāvūl Malá or "Camel's Hump." This is part of the right flank of Nilambūr Valley while its left spur rises to 8000 feet in the Nilgiri Hills. [28]

Flatlands and low hills between mountain and sea make up a strip of very fertile land that increases from about 20 miles' width in the north to a width of 60 miles in the south. The coastal portion of this, with its extensive inland waterways, is rarely more than two or three miles wide. All the land that is level or made up of rolling hills, even steep slopes, is intensively farmed. A 14th century visitor, Ibn Batuta, is quoted as recording, "The whole of the way by land [down the coast] lies under the shade of trees, and in all of the space of two months' journey there is not one span free of cultivation; everybody has his garden, and his house is in the middle of it." [29]

The *Gazetteer* notes that except for three tributaries of the Cauvery, the many rivers of Kerala flow from the Ghāts to the sea, where they are backed up by littoral currents and then flow into the backwaters and lagoons along the coast. [30] The tremendous power of those rivers at flood time has resulted in the total destruction of temples and towns as well as the formation of new alluvial lands in coastal areas. Shallow waters of the continental shelf extend three miles from shore before the depths of the Arabian Sea plunge to 1000 fathoms or more. These seas bear cultural contacts that are basic to the development of Asian and Western civilization, communication that must be borne in mind throughout the following consideration of temple monuments.

PLATE 13

Laterite and Granite

The rich earth of Kerala that supports the growth of pepper, hardwoods, and other products that drew early traders to this coast from many parts of the world is topped by a layer of laterite throughout the low country. Beneath this is underlying rock that is composed of fine-grained gneisses. Two kinds of laterite predominate: the vesicular variety that is formed by the decomposition of gneiss *in situ* and the pellety type that is a detrital rock, meaning one that is produced by simple disintegration or wearing away. The second kind is the product of vesicular laterite.[31] Laterite is found under fairly shallow coverings of rich soil, as massive outcrops without vegetation, and along with huge boulders of granite and gneiss Formidable cliffs of such stone occur in places along the sea, as near Janardhana Temple at Varkalla in Trivandrum District. Several of the largest dense outcrops were employed for the carving of the earliest rock-cut shrines, like that of Śiva in Madavurpara in Trivandrum District. Palaeolithic times leave the remains of granitic dolmens, "umbrella stone" shelters, and menhirs.[32]

PLATE 14

PLATE 15

Houses are typically built atop a foundation of laterite stone, occasionally harder granite, with a height of up to 3 feet. Temple bases are usually higher and nearly always of granite. Courtyards are paved with granite at sacred sites, as are walkways that are used for the movements of circumambulation and procession. Laterite is also used in this way, especially for outer paths. And it is a remarkable building material. Laterite is red-orange to black in color here, easily cut from the earth in blocks while it is soft but gradually hardening when it is exposed to air. Its texture is very rough and the rock is extremely porous so that it cannot be smoothed or polished. The 12-month growing season of Kerala is maintained in large measure through the reservoir capabilities of laterite, as underground water seeps into its sponge-like mass to be stored there long after the end of each rainy season. It is less ideal as a building material because it is crumbly and unstable with very little tensile strength, itself the product of breakdown, yet it is abundantly available and it may be protected or "sealed" with coatings of mud or plaster. Until about the 16th century it was probably the only material used to build houses, the so-called "mud houses" of South India, because hardwoods and durable stone were generally considered suitable only for gods.

Laterite does not take detailed carving, but it does allow for massive and solid construction at relatively low cost. Blocks are simply piled one atop the other without mortar, as at Angkor. As already mentioned, laterite is used to construct outer boundary walls for both temples and houses, with or without the protection of thatch roofing. And the overhang of structural roofs on any Kerala building protects not only people from the elements but protects the walls themselves. Without such roof protection, laterite structures would soon "melt."

Wood and its Selection

All of Kerala is rich in timber, with southern Kerala alone, the former Travancore State, having 600 varieties of trees. Preferred materials for construction are teak, rosewood, jackwood, and ebony. Of these, teak is superior for all

PLATE 16

kinds of building and carving. Its yellowish-brown wood is hard-grained and resistant to water, making it especially suitable to ship building as well as to construction in the rainy climate of the south. Along with the other woods teak is a key substance for Kerala architecture, just as sal and deodar are the main materials of the Himalaya. The timbers are long-lasting, some buildings still standing after roughly 400 years, but it is hard to accept the statement of R. V. Poduval that the woodwork of the Siva temple at Katinamkulam near Muruk-kumpuzha station of the Travancore/Quilon railway line belongs to Kollam Era 389 (1214 A.D.)[33]

Wood is appreciated for its ability to span spaces wherever it is used, and one key measurement in Kerala architecture, a kind of module, is the length of the doorframe lintel. Endurance is important not only in terms of climate but because logs are floated in water for long periods as they are transported to places where they are aged and cut into planks and beams. Hardwoods thrive at the higher elevations but most population centers are coastal and so the distances are usually long.

As a master carpenter begins to build, he has numerous specific guides that he may choose to follow, some of their directions already having been noted in this study. Foremost among the guides to domestic architecture is the *Silparatna* of Sri Kumara, composed in the 16th century. Translated for this work by N.P. Unni, Reader in the Department of Sanskrit at the University of Kerala, parts of the *Silparatna* reveal the following points on selecting wood, along with making bricks and tiles. [34] As in the case of selecting architectural sites, many of the literary directions are, in fact, prohibitions.

Among kinds of trees that are rejected in the *Silparatna* for building purposes are those that are attacked by insects, have creepers, or bear thorns. Lumber should not be taken from trees that are used for worship by Brahmans, always bear fruit, are roosted in by animals and birds or located in temple precincts. Also to be avoided are trees that are standing at roadsides or located in burning *ghat* areas. Also undesirable are trees that are curved, dry, broken, occupied by serpents or goblins, oozing water, producing milky sap, uprooted by wind, or damaged by fire. Similarly, trees are unacceptable if they have been pierced by the tusks of elephants or struck by lightning. They should not be taken from temple sites or locations that are meeting places of rivers with the sea. Trees growing in lakes or wells are also to be rejected. In addition, many species are recognized as obstacles to happiness if they are used to build houses. [35] Rather surprising is the fact that several restricted types, including trees with milky sap, may be used to construct temples.

Mixing many woods together in a structure is never desirable, and a king who wishes to be victorious in battle is urged to build his palace of one, two, or three varieties only. Of all available types, the *Śilparatna* lists the following as especially suited to dwellings: Saka *(Tectona grandis)*, Asana *(Terminalia tomentosa)*, Madhuka *(Bassia latifolia)*, Sala *(Artocarpus locucha)*, Sarja *(Vatica robusta)*, Candana *(Sandal*

sirium myrtifolium), Panasa (Jack tree or *Artocarpus integrifolia),* and Devadaru *(Avaria longifolia).*

Some particularly Nair beliefs regarding trees relate that Tulsi *(Ocimum sanctum)* is worshipped in every traditional house as a way of honoring Śiva and, according to P. Thankappan Nair, [36] basil is grown inside the large courtyard of a Nair Tarwad or family home as a way of keeping out certain venomous reptiles. Trifoliate leaves of the Bilva-Bell tree called Kūvalam *(Aegle marmelos)* signify the acts of Śiva in creation, preservation, and destruction, and menstrual women do not approach trees that have such foliage. They also stay apart from coconut trees. The tamarind is interesting in that its branches are said to be the abode of female deities while its trunk holds dangerous spirits. Individual trees are sometimes attributed with divine powers, like the Pāla tree at the temple of Chottanikkara Bhagavatī which is full of pounded nails that are said to imprison malicious spirits. Almost every temple has a Pipal tree with raised platform around its base as the most sacred growing thing. And various gods have their associated plants and trees. Lord Śiva wears leaves of the Erikku shrub *(Calotropis gigantus)* while Bhagavatī temples are marked by the Arya-Veppu or Neem tree that is appropriate to Kālī.

Brick and Tile

While thatch may have been the most typical roofing material of early times, and laterite is still most constant for walls, brick and tile must also be considered as important to domestic and sacred architecture. The *Śilparatna* is quite specific in defining four kinds of earth or clay. They are Cikkana which is viscous by nature, red and chalky Pāṇḍara, Saloṇā which is saline, and reddish Tāmraphullā clay which is the best for making bricks and tiles. The latter is bereft of impurities and contains fine sands but no gravel. It is processed by being placed in a special pit that is lined with bricks or stones, and water is poured over it to knee depth. Then it is made into a paste by being repeatedly stepped on. After all of the water has soaked into the clay it is sprinkled with a decoction, extracted essence, that is made from the bark of trees with milky sap, usually fig. [37] When this has been absorbed, the clay is sprinkled with a second decoction that is made from the Sirīṣa tree *(Acacia sirissa)* and it, too, is absorbed. A third such substance may also be added, this made from Triphalā, i.e., three Myrobalans or fruits of *Terminalia chebula, Terminalia ballerica,* and *Phyllanthus embelica.* A period of 30 days is normally required between each sprinkling for a total of 90 days' time, but one interpretation of the rules proposes that 10-day intervals are sufficient. The process is the same for both brick and tile manufacture.

Brick is a more stable building material than laterite, but it is seldom used, probably because of the ready availability of the more porous rock. The antiquity of brick dates to the very beginning of settled life in India and it is made in Kerala according to quite typical methods that are far less elaborate than those employed to make the more "finished" brick of the Newārs in Nepal, for example. Yet

certain factors regarding the classification of brick and tile are unusual and worthy of special attention

Bricks are measured in *aṅgula* units, each being the classic breadth of the thumb, and *hasta* measures as the length of the forearm or cubit of about 18 inches. There are 24 *aṅgulas* in a *hasta.* A standard brick has a length of 12 *aṅgulas* and a breadth that is half of its depth. It's height or thickness is determined by its diameter or, as in building plans, its total circumference. When they are cut from the rich earth of paddy fields, bricks are marked on their bases and tips and then dried in the sun. On an auspicious day an oven is constructed of brick, tall and fairly narrow with battened walls and a chimney in its tower. Unfired bricks are put down, spaces between them, in layers that are separated by wood, tinder, and straw. A thin coating of mud clay and water is put over the kiln structure (this step often being eliminated today) and the inner fire is lit. It is allowed to burn for from 10 to 14 days. Traditional steps are that the bricks are then removed and put into water where they are aged for at least six months, and up to a year. When prepared according to all of the rules, bricks are suited for temple construction. [38]

Those bricks that have broad or heavy bases are classified as feminine while those with broad or heavy tips are termed neuter. A "masculine" brick is even in shape with equal base and tip, and all its lines straight and parallel. The color of the bricks is reddish brown; they contain no additives; they are not burnished or tinted in any way. Examples of temple walls and corbelled ceilings of brick are known, although they are not frequent, and H. Sarkar points to the ruined Siva temple at Tirunillai near Palghat town as having the finest kiln-burnt bricks in Kerala. [39]

The classification of tiles is much more complex than that of bricks. Eleven types of tiles are differentiated, mainly according to their measurements in *aṅgulas* and *yavaṣ* (a *yava* is 1/6 to 1/8 of an *aṅgula).* A variety termed *nīvraloṣṭa,* for example, has a length that measures 4 *aṅgulas* more than the breadth of the *nirupaṭi* rafter that is the lowest part of a roof beam. [40] Eleven different mould types are used to make the tiles, all being made of wood that is 1 *aṅgula* thick. The moulds are measured by careful calculation of cross lines and then cut from planks.

PLATE 17

When a mould is ready, its plank surface is powdered with ashes and then clay is spread inside the mould and pressed to uniform thickness to make a tile. A thick edging at the tip of the tile will be so shaped that the tile can be suspended from or hooked onto rafters as a roof covering. The tip, base, and sides are cut with knives or bamboo tools to make the tiles even and regular. After the clay has dried, the tile is removed and given final touches such as inward or outward curves so that it will interlock with other tiles. The usual product is rectangular and interlocking but some buildings, both early and modern, are covered with a fish scale kind of pattern that results from the use of "Dutch tiles" that are small, flat, and circular in shape. Tiles for the tip or end of roofs require special forming.

PLATE 18

Like bricks, tiles are dried, but away from direct sunlight. They are baked in a kiln on an auspicious day that is determined by astrological calculation. Alternatively, a pyre may be made for baking tiles. This is done as straw, chaff, grain, and some water are put over the tiles on a bed of straw atop dry tamarind branches spread on the ground. Tiles are placed in water for aging, just like bricks, after they are baked. They are hard, impervious to water, bright red-orange in color, and durable. Although it is not true that Christian missions introduced tile-making to Kerala, they were instrumental in developing mass production of tiles at low cost, so that today it is rare to find temples or substantial houses being covered only with thatch. It is important to remember, however, that all roofs retain the shape and proportion of thatch construction to the present day.

Copper

Copper sheeting is used in the form of flat shingles to cover temple roofs of the *srikovil* and associated sacred buildings. Copper was imported even before Portuguese contact, as indicated by a 13th century inscription at the temple in Varkalla that refers to its copper roof covering. The sheets are nailed to the wooden roofs to protect joints and stop seepage of rainwater.[41] The copper is sometimes gilded, especially for *stūpi* pinnacles on the roofs of temples, but as simple shingles it varies from yellow-brown to red in color. In addition, copper is found in the form of upturned roof corners, like the *rūpa* elements of Nepal, as simple curves or hooded *nāga* snakes.

PLATE 19

Color

A final point regards color as it is applied to domestic buildings, for in Kerala painted walls are intense and even startling. In Calicut one is struck by green or yellow houses that are surrounded by blood-red fences. And in Muslim areas of Malappuram District the particular local color is ice blue, beneath red tile roofs. Outer walls made of laterite are striped or rendered as checkerboard patterns of yellow, blue, and green. The hues, most often primary or secondary colors, are set off not only by their own contrasts but also by the dense green setting of their environment. Pigments are hot, cold, but never neutral. And so the mosque of Nadapuram in Calicut District is the color of limes.

Chapter Four

The Beginnings of Sacred Art

In addition to dolmen structures made of stone, menhir monument stones that are frequent in lowland areas, and rock assemblies of large stone slabs on pedestal supports that are popularly known as umbrella stones, prehistoric paintings have recently come to light close to Maraiyur village in eastern Kerala, near Tamil Nadu, through the discoveries of S.P Tampi of the Kerala State Directorate of Archaeology. [42] The paintings are thought to be religious in subject, at least in part, as they show superimposed animal and human figures. Some are individuals and others are grouped in scenes. It is suggested that they date from the Mesolithic through Early Historic Periods. These newly found works provide additional evidence of the great antiquity of Kerala culture, just as they add to recent overview research in Indian stone age painting by Brooks and Wakankar. [43]

Megaliths are found all over the state, generally being associated with South Indian cults of the dead and functioning in ways both sepulchral and commemorative. Cist burials are common and burial jars of *terra cotta* are continually being unearthed, as in recent digging of the Varkalla tunnel. [44] A major find made in 1960 at Putamkara in Kunnathur Taluk consisted of megalithic monuments in cist-circles, with inner rings measuring from 18½ to 25 feet in diameter. Dolmens are also found in circular groupings, especially in mountain areas and around Trichur. Umbrella stones called *kudakallu* are sepulchral, as are *topikallu* (cap stone) monuments, and these are also found especially in the Trichur area. [45] More important to this study are rock-cut caves that abound in Kerala, for they indicate the beginnings of temple art.

Numerous rock-cut temples of rectangular plan, each with an entry porch and a small shrine room at the back, are found throughout Kerala. A few of these are treated here, partly in terms of their relation to artistic traditions outside of the state. Some unique finds, subterranean and hidden, are curiously local and puzzling. They present extraordinary spaces.

In 1928 a group of young men visiting the well-known Bhadrakālî Falls found it reduced to a mere trickle due to severe drought. They noticed an opening 7 by 3 feet in size located high up the rock wall that was usually veiled by falling water. The visitors climbed 50 feet up the granite cliff in southern Travancore and entered a remarkable enclosure. Their flashlights revealed such an astonishing space that their spokesman, S. Gopalakrishna Pillai, hurried to notify scholars of their find. T.K. Joseph records that a long corridor projects in its first section for

150 feet into the rock, to a place where there are two very small doorways of 2 by 3 feet in its walls on either side. [46] The opening on the right leads to a shrine room that measures 15 by 7 by 6 feet with an image of Bhagavatī at its center. A nearby hole, 2 inches square, is thought to have spouted water for ritual bathing of the image. On the opposite side of the corridor, to the south, is a larger room that measures 21 by 10 by 7 feet. In this were found only some bones and damaged metal spears.

The excavation continues deeper into the rock until it narrows, at a distance of 330 feet, to a width of only 2 feet. This narrow passage proceeds until it reaches a spacious hall that is located 580 feet from the eastern entrance. The hall measures 80 feet long from north to south, 20 feet wide, and 7 ½ feet high. The floor of the hall is entirely polished, and the southern portion of the hall, 20 by 5 feet in size, is enclosed by blocks of granite rather than living rock of the mountain.

Built above the underground passage and on the hill from which the falls descend is a temple of Śiva, along with attendant shrines of Hanumant, Subrahmaṇya and Kṛṣṇa. There is also a large dining hall built above ground and from this an underground cellar is reached. This space is 16 by 5 by 10 feet in size, with a doorway that leads to a passage that is 15 feet below ground level and connects to the large hall mentioned above. The total underground complex is unique, but it is not entirely without documentation, for copper plates of the Āy king Śrī Vallabha dated 857 A.D. were found in the associated Śiva temple. The plates refer to the making of an underground temple and subsidiary buildings by that former king of Travancore. Royal associations continued into later times as a palace compound, Koyikkal Vila, was built east of the falls and numerous other royal residences were also added. No other monument quite like the chambered corridor and rooms of Bhadrakālī has been found in this country of rock-cut art. Surely it speaks of reverence for the powers of the earth, and perhaps the earliest beliefs of Kerala.

Survival of megalithic associations and earth spirit orientation is analyzed by V.T. Induchudan in his study of Kodungallur temple in Cranganore, *The Secret Chamber,* that recalls the character of the Bhadrakālī excavations even though it is built above ground. Located on earth that is sacred to Śiva and Kālī, the temple consists of a long hall made of granite and divided into three chambers. [47] The central chamber is the *sanctum sanctorum* of Kālī herself, and she is represented there by an eight-armed image standing 6 feet tall and made of wood that is said to be jackfruit trunk. Her pose is seated and she is shown after having killed the demon Daruka, whose head lies beside her. To the image of Kālī, bristling with weapons, contrasts a simple *liṅga* with moon crescent that stands for Śiva. Other images include that of a *kṣetrapāla* deity, large in size and made of granite, as entrance guardian, and a crude subsidiary figure of Vasurimala who is associated with smallpox.

The outer walls of the temple measure 30 feet square and the building is 12

feet high. It is approached from the north and east directions in a seaboard peninsula plot of nearly ten acres. It has porticos on the northern and eastern sides, with the central hall that is divided into three parts opening into the north portico. Inside the central chamber the Kālī image faces north, while the western chamber contains forms of the *sapta matṛ* (seven mothers) facing north along with images of Gaṇapati and the terrifying Vīṛabhadra, created by Śiva, facing east and west. When the western door of the *sanctum sanctorum* is opened, a rare occurrence, it affords a view of the western wall inside of the third and secret chamber. The wall is hung with crimson cloth and *pūjā* is offered in its direction. The room, which contains no image, is considered to be terrible and mysterious. From it, a subterranean passage that is now sealed leads toward the east. [48] This connects to a closed chamber in the ground which Induchudan associates with megaliths and burial patterns of prehistory, and suggests that Śiva and his "daughter" Kālī are symbolically buried at Kodungallur because of their identification with cremation grounds and their fondness for graveyards.

The worship of Kālī is especially connected with the Nair people, who have functioned as her *pujāris* or priests in many temples. Legend, recorded in the Badrolpathi *Kilippāṭṭu,* is that after she destroyed Daruka, who had secured a boon that he could not be killed by god or man and thus caused the male deities to take on female forms (Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brāhma, Subrahmaṇya, Dharmarāja, and Indra became Vaiṣṇavi, Māheśvari, Brāhmi, Kaumāri, Vārāhi, and Indrāni respectively), she was praised by Śiva for her military might. Gaṇapati and Nandi were asked to guard her gate as her children so that her motherly instinct would prevail over her ferocious aspect. And Śiva asked her to go to Malanāḍ (Malabar) to receive eternal homage as his daughter.[49]

Dravidian elements of Kālī worship are traced by H.H. Kerala Varma Thampuran who finds both hymnal and ritual peculiarities that are of Keralaic nature. [50] Among these is the ceremony of tukkom kūttal that is carried out on the Bharaṇi day of the month of Mīnam around a gallows that rests on a platform while supporting a hook that is attached to the body of a penitent, who is then suspended in the air. The hanging person dresses in martial dress of past times, with a garland of *cetti* flowers around his neck, and holds a sword and shield in a military way as the pole and platform apparatus, called *tukkaccātu,* is carried three times around the temple precincts. The exhausting offering may be made as plea to be freed from illness or for other purposes, and its "victim" is always a Nair. And Nair families are attached to any given Bhagavatī temple, always called *kavu,* for duties such as attaching hooks to the victims and carrying the apparatus around the temple.[51] For all of the elaborate story and ritual that surrounds the cult of Kālī/Bhagavatī in Kerala, the chambered temple at Kodungallor is best noted for the simple statement of its buried cell. It serves to instruct that the greatest *garbha gṛha* or "womb house" is that of the earth itself, and this is a point to be retained as sophisticated cave temples and structural monuments are considered in Kerala. The theme is fundamental.

CHAPTER FIVE

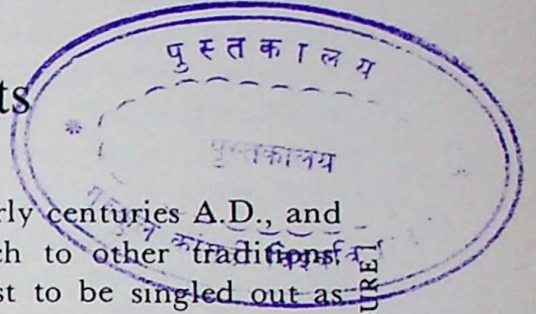
Developed Rock-cut Arts

SACRED SPACES ARE much more than buried cells in the early centuries A.D., and Kerala produces fully developed shrines that owe much to other traditions. Influence of the Pallava Dynasty (c. 608–850) is the first to be singled out as being major,[52] and its effect is evident at Vilinjam.[53] A carved boulder shrine, small in size and located at Vilinjam near Kovalam in Trivandrum District recalls the simple grandeur of Kerala megaliths while displaying some of the subtlety and sculptural elaboration of early medieval India. Locally known as Kottukal, the temple site is dedicated to Śiva. Its carving is unfinished, with the interior wall still showing the kind of square indentations and rough chisel marks that are found on partly cut shrines at Mahabalipuram. Pallava affinity is obvious and has been long recognized, with Stella Kramrisch remarking in a pioneer study that, "the rock-cut sculptures of Kaviyur and Vilinjam in the eighth century represent a local branch of the tradition made famous by the 'Pallava' school."[54] The Pallava link is an essential one but it is not entirely clear, with Clifford Reis Jones repeating the legend that a sculptor named Matṛgupta supervised the making of monuments at Mahabalipuram.[55] Physical evidence of an exchange between Kerala and Pallava country is noted in such elements as columns formed of upper and lower cubes with octagonal shafts between, as noted by M.G.S. Narayan at Kaviyur and Tirunandikara,[56] and in less obvious features as well. Wood-derived Pallava patterns may be reflected in the stone temple walls of Kerala.

PLATE 20 FIGURE 1

A small image of a deity is a late addition inside the shrine at Vilinjam. Much more interesting are a figure of Śiva as Kirātamūrti standing nearly life size to the left side of the shrine door and balancing figure of Śiva accompanied by Pārvatī to the right. The bodies are elongated, lively, and elegant. They are harmonious with the rock matrix from which they seem to swell, like the best of Pallava architecture-sculpture. As human forms, they illustrate what Benjamin Rowland calls "that dualism persistent in Indian art between intensive naturalism and the conception of divine forms according to the principles of an appropriately abstract canon of proportions."[57] The sculptures are largely Pallava in their physiognomy and air of dignity, but at the same time H. Sarkar remarks that they compare well in their stance and graceful mobility to the dancing Śiva image at Tirumalapuram that was carved by Pāṇḍya Dynasty artists.[58]

For all its significance in terms of early aesthetics and chronology, the Vilinjam shrine is of modest size, measuring only about 16 feet wide and 10 feet

high. It faces east, with its cell now containing the loose image, of Vīṇādhara Dakṣiṇamūrti..[59] The rock monument is nearly camouflaged by its green setting, and it is carved only on its east side. There is no inscription to provide absolute dating, but its style leads to eighth century attribution. It is one of the most beautiful rock-cut works in Kerala and it should be considered together with nearby structural temples that are ascribed to the 9th century and that may be compared to temples on the Dieng plateau in Java with their translated Pallava elements.

The Tirunandikara temple is found in present-day Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu State, but it is continuous with southern Kerala culture. It is a cave temple of rectangular plan with its broad porch oriented to the south. Its square interior room, the *sanctum,* faces east, however. In this it is like a structural temple that is located nearby between the granite hill of the rock-cut shrine and the Nandi River that flows by it. The small shrine room contains a *liṅga* of Śiva and the cave walls were once covered with mural paintings. Pillars survive with four-sided base portions and octagonal shafts. These have bevelled corbel type capitals, like those of cave temples in Pāṇḍya country. Thus H. Sarkar compares the monument to Umaiyānaṇḍār cave at Tirupparaṅgunram in Madurai District and Satyavāgīśvara cave temple at Tirumayam in Pudukkottai District.[60]

PLATE 21

Twelve steps are cut into the massive granite outcrop to provide access to Tirunandikara temple as its final approach. From the level of its large entry porch four more steps reach the interior shrine room. It is small and dark, equal to the *garbha gṛha* of structural temples. Painting traces are lacking in this space but were once numerous on the walls of the large room before it, which measures 18 feet wide by 8 feet 3 inches deep. Mural fragments here are of great value in the history of South Indian art despite their extreme disintegration. They were discovered in 1933 by R. Vasudeva Poduval, and they are evidently more ruined today than at that time. Being 23 miles from Trivandrum on the main road to the Cape, they are easily accessible. Style, technique, and an inscription found at the site support attribution of the paintings to as early as the 9th century A.D. The inscription itself, in Vaṭṭeḷuttu script and Tamil language, may date from the second half of the 8th century.[61] These are the times of the birth of fully developed arts in this part of the subcontinent.

PLATE 145

As noted, the rectangular room functions as a porch or *maṇḍapa* for the small shrine, like a seed for fully grown temples with progressions of spaces in the classical period to come. The walls of the *maṇḍapa* are smooth and divided into plastered panels, most of the plaster now having fallen away. Fragments of the coating reveal that large paintiugs adorned the two main wall surfaces while two smaller works flanked the shrine room door. In clockwise order around the porch, the works represent Gaṇapati and attendants, Kṛṣṇa (?), Yali and a fragmentary hand in the gesture of *kathaka mudrā* of the Bharatanāṭya dance, two seated ladies, a fragmentary female that may be Sarsavatī, and traces of Pārvatī with

worshippers.[62] Mural painting technique is discussed in another section, but it may be noted here that seven of the nine panels at Tirunandikara were copied soon after their discovery for display in the Sri Chitralaya Art Gallery of the Travancore museum in 1935. They are still on view but the record that they provide is not entirely satisfactory. The copyist, Mr. Sarkis Katchdourian from Iran, made attractive paintings of his own but they perhaps reveal too much influence from his previous experience of copying frescoes at Ajanta. Line, color, and physical types in his Kerala copies seem to be more central than southern in pattern. Still, they do record voluptuous and ornate forms, such as the extravagant image of Gaṇapati, that would otherwise be lost. Style at Tirunandikara is of the south.

The evidence of only one small fragment shows that the ceiling of this shrine was painted as well as the walls. And the polychrome interior was protected, for there are indentations both above the porch and in front of it to show that a roof and supporting columns, most likely of wood, were probably set up as a kind of preliminary porch before the entrance. It must be assumed that in addition to sculptural and architectural works, painting shared stylistic patterns with southern art in general. Tamil contact, especially, is recognizable throughout the history of Kerala temple art. In this, architecture is like other traditions such as that of sacred dance by women in the Nair *devadāsī* tradition, now discontinued but advocated in the 13th century *Sukasandesam.* And it is impossible to understand Malabar shadow play arts as they developed in a coastal area between Cochin and South Malabar without reference to Tamil language and the Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kambar.[63]

Other rock-cut monuments, like that near the famous structural temple of Siva at Kaviyur, will be briefly mentioned along with the following survey of structural temples. Like many, the two shrines mentioned above are germinal for later developments in works that are built rather than carved. Spatial additions to the basic *maṇḍapa* and *garbha gṛha* will be many, and decorative elaboration will be astounding. But every sacred monument will come down to the original two elements; the *sanctum sanctorum* will always remain small, simple, dark, and supreme.

Chapter Six

Developed Temple Design

The first known structural temples in Kerala begin at the time when Kulaśekharavarman and then Rājasekharavarman were on the throne of the Chera Dynasty in the first quarter of the 9th century. This statement is made on the basis of an inscription at the Siva temple in Kandiyur, Alleppey District, which is dated to the 123rd year of the God of Kandiyur, or 823 A.D. *(Travancore Archaeological Series,* Vol. I, part XVI, pp. 289–91).[64] Some sculptural fragments are slightly earlier than this, but H. Sarkar puts none of them earlier than the 8th or 9th century.[65] Relationships with contemporary accomplishments of neighboring cultures are essential to all artistic developments, and it will be seen that the earliest temples are very much part of the main Dravidian tradition of South India. Kerala and Tamil Nadu were a single language zone, with Malayālam existing as a separate language only from about the mid-12th century. As time passed, monuments of Kerala became more and more regionalized, especially in the central and northern parts of the state. Kerala was always set apart geographically from the rest of India, even as it maintained constant international contact by sea.

FIGURE 2

As indicated, elements found in the earliest rock-cut shrines are retained in structural monuments, notably the interior shrine room as *garbha gṛha* and the simple porch as *ardha maṇḍapa* closest to the inner space. And the foundations of structural temples retain the forms and styles of other early southern traditions, even into modern times. Yet the basal portion comes to wear a kind of Kerala hat, a superstructure of understated beauty and elegance in wood that is very much of local type. Qualities of geometry are emphasized again and again in this study, for powerfully clear statements of form are the most outstanding features of Kerala architecture. But such bold statement is refined by sculptural and painted additions of great quantity and high quality.

PLATE 22

The temple is built to be used, and it is helpful to list the typical pattern of five *pūjā,* performances daily. These arts of worship are *ushappūjā*, *ethirt'ha pūjā, panthiraṭi pūjā, uccha pūjā,* and *athaḷa pūjā* according to Malayāla Thanthram practice.[66] These follow specified pathways of movement and make use of the multiple buildings that are described below. The greatest impetus for temple art was the Bhakti movement of medieval times, leading to construction and renovation of sacred monuments to an unprecedented degree in early medieval centuries. The happening was crucial to the growth of Kerala art, yet it

cannot be logically explained. N. Subrahmania Sastri contributes a sensitive analysis of the Bhakti ideal.[67]

PLATE 23

> Bhakti implies faith in God, love for Him, dedication of everything to His service and the attainment of Mokṣa by self-less devotion. Supreme devotion to God does neither arise all of a sudden nor does it blossom through mere lifeless religious practice. It comes as the grace of God. Bhakti, therefore, is Divine and is based on self-control and unselfishness. It requires steadfastness of faith, as faith is the link between the soul and the Lord. Above all it requires a glad and passionate soul of self-surrender.

It has been said that "the temple as an institution was an Aryan gift to South India" and that "the so-called Kerala school is responsible only for covering the product of the Dravidian tradition and it is not known whether this outer covering existed in the Chera period or came only at a later stage."[68] But neither comment negates the value of examining local inventions for their relation to temple monuments. These include huts used for tribal rituals, domestic architecture of the Nairs, and the total arts of palaces and mosques.

A classic temple, called *ambalam* or *kṣetram* (sometimes *tali)* has the *srikovil* as its heart. The *srikovil* plan may be round, square, rectangular, oval, or apse-shaped (by being a rectangle with rounded end) and the temple normally faces east. The structure above the *adhiṣṭhāna* is termed the *vimāna* from plinth to spire. Within this, the *aditala* is the ground floor. Some buildings are small and single-storeyed, called *alpa-vimāna,* while others reach heights of many roofs. It is important to note, however, that the upper levels of the *srikovil* are not functional; their role is to give the building visual prominence and increased preciousness. Often, as at the temple of Viṣṇu in Tiruvalla, the gateway building takes on greatest height. It may even exist as a structure apart from the cloister walls.

The ideal organization of Kerala temples is one defined by the *pañcha-prākāra* of five successive enclosures. These are known locally as *katte, balivaṭṭam, cuttambalam* or *nālambalam,* and *viḷakkumādham* with the *śivelippura* as processional path around the *sanctum sanctorum.* Circular movement is possible around all borders with the series of enclosing "squares," one within the other. And many constructions are found within the *prākāra* boundaries, including bathing pools and temple theatres called *kūttambalam.* But the most sacred ground is that which surrounds the *srikovil* within cloistered walls.

Experiencing Space—Trichambaram

With domestic architecture in mind, it is useful to again consider the path of movement and the spatial experience of a typical sacred monument: the Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple at Taliparamba in Cannanore District. It is a large complex, grandly approached by a long and wide stairway of slowly descending levels. It is shrouded by heavy forest beyond a low wall of laterite in its rather hidden placement, and a large bathing tank sacred to Viṣṇu is located to the temple's right side. An imposing peaked roof of processional entry, supported atop high columns, extends out from the cloister wall to meet the visitor. This is typical as a *mukha maṇḍapa* or porch of approach. Beneath this are found an offering box, a

PLATE 24

flag pole that projects up through the roof, and a *balipīṭha* stone platform for receiving gifts and oblations. None of these parts resembles domestic patterns, but by passing through the *prākāra* to the interior, one reaches a kind of super-house.

FIGURES 4,5, FIGURE 3

To the left and right of the long entry passage of about 15 feet, typically high stone platforms are found. These are covered by a steeply pitched tile roof that rests on heavy columns. The columns are brightly lacquered in pure hues of red, yellow, black, and green, with their regularly curved surfaces reportedly the result of lathe-turning by the use of elephants. The shaded and columned verandahs are, again, meant for the communal use of Brāhmaṇs.

Beyond the raised platforms, the courtyard holds another carved passage with double roof over wood-slatted walls. Its gables have suspended pendants made of wood. Being joined to the cloister and to the entrance passage, this building is adorned by copper roofing above a lower roof of tiles and it has miniature *stūpi* pinnacles at the top. Its arms shelter a dance platform to the left and a well plus grinder and mortar to the right. The main function of this elaborate structure is to integrate the approach buildings and the court. A kitchen and storage area is built into the *prākāra* cloister walls so as to be easily accessible to the courtyard.

The granite-paved floor of the court is marked by a shallow channel or drain the *vārimārga.* This leads from the right side wall of the *srikovil* at an angle toward the entry side of the court. It carries offerings that have been poured over the image or symbol inside the shrine building, and thus blessed, out of the *garbha gṛha* or inner room. They are received by worshippers outside. The liquid is called *abhisekha* and as anywhere in India, this is *prasāda* or sacred gift from gods to men. Worshippers and priests move around the temple in the normal clockwise directions of *pradaksina,* but they are typically trained to reverse their movement rather than cross the channel with its charged contents.

PLATE 25

The Temple and its Message

At Trichambaram, the inner temple is of *dvitala-vimāna* type, meaning that it has two storeys. It is higher than the winged passage building or porch, and both of its roofs glitter with copper. Its plan is perfectly square and therefore of great antiquity in the history of South Asian art. A vestibule extends from the inner building at the front side to shelter worshippers, who are allowed to come to the door and gaze inside but not to ascend the stairs. Small horseshoe gables, called *nāsikā*, of the shape frequent on early *chaitya* halls, adorn each side of the pyramidal upper roof. These *hāra* or miniature shrines show Brahmā on the east, Siva on the south, Narasiṃha to the west, and Vaikuṇṭhanātha to the north. The building is topped by a single pinnacle.

FIGURE 6

The exploits of Kṛṣṇa provide the theme for art in carved struts beneath both roofs at Trichambaram. A devotee may look up to consider representations of the mother of Kṛṣṇa before his birth, the newborn child, his battles with demons, his loving exploits, and great monsters who lend their mighty support to the corners of the overhanging roofs. One grouping (beneath the lower roof and on the side of the building to the right of the door) presents two remarkable images that are as

PLATE 26

exciting as they are colorful. In one, Kṛṣṇa lifts Mt. Govardhana over his earthly world to protect it from the deluge sent down by a jealous Indra. In the second image, Kṛṣṇa appears beautifully poised as he stands upon the head of the wayward serpent Kāliya. The sculptures are about two-thirds life-size and fully round as they move and turn on the body axis; their limbs are slightly plump as they swell with the life breath of *praṇa;* their look is direct, wide-eyed, immediate. In their high placement, the roof strut figures lean out over the pavement to directly confront pious observers Contact with them is powerful.

Even more direct than contact with the struts is confrontation with the image inside the holy of holies. The temple of Trichambaram holds a large image of Kṛṣṇa carved of stone and hung with metal ornaments. It can be seen in a halo of lights in the center of the double-walled *garbha gṛha* room. It occupies the center of a square maṇḍala plan and, in this, it is comparable to countless temple objects in South Asia. But the image is unusual in India as it is approached so closely by worshippers who stand at its feet, so to speak. They stop only at the threshold of a short and steep *sopāna* stairway before the elevated room. Priests convey offerings to the interior and *prasāda* blessings are dispensed at the door, as well as through the ablution channel that is fed by a simple drainage spout from the temple. Such spouts are called *pranāla,* and they are sometimes supported by dwarf attendants carved of stone. These may be male or female.

FIGURE 13

The *srikovil* is meaningful and beautiful not only for its mysterious interior and exterior carvings below the roofs, but also for murals that date from the 15th and 16th centuries. These represent an early stage of surviving wall paintings in Kerala. Lime plaster coating over stone walls is thin here, perhaps belonging to an early kind of technique, and the large but rather faded paintings upon the white ground attend central niches on all sides of the lower storey. They represent pairs of *dvārapāla* guardians, ferocious but attractive at the same time. While the temple is an early one, dating in origin to the 10th-11th century, it should be mentioned that at least two major renovations have occurred. These were completed in the 14th-15th and 17th-18th centuries.

Here, as at the Karātt temple and Ponmeri Śiva temple in Calicut district, the porch summarizes artistry in wood. The *namaskāra maṇḍapa* is raised 4 feet above the court and it is paved with stone. The step up is unadorned and the porch holds no image. Its post and lintel construction is simple, with fanning roof beams that are a minor reconstruction about 60 years old. It is not a remarkable structure except for its ceiling and miniature strut carvings, which are superb. Tiny niches hold glaring protector faces while figurative struts of Kṛṣṇa rest on lively elephants with swaying trunks. Floral and geometric painted designs frame everything in brilliant color. And an outstanding continuous frieze at the cornice level is wrapped around the full interior of the porch.

PLATE 27

PLATE 28

There is nothing rigid or static about the flow of story that is carved into the wooden frieze. Curving lines and sensuous forms meld in an almost musical

rhythm, as the epic *Mahābhārata* comes to life. Kerala carving accomplishes a quite unique blend of aggressively swelling volume plus accent outline, so that every form appears to be convex and "framed." Figures are the composites of perfect parts, and joints appear only where convexities intersect. In this example, Kṛṣṇa plays his flute happily in a tree, having stolen the *gopī* garments while the shy young women rise naked from the waters of their bath. Symbolically, they approach the god openly and without disguise. All the forms are voluptuous, from breasts to branches. And an adjoining scene, with maidens in water sports, brings exciting action amid swirling waves to physical forms that are already highly animated. The very special accomplishment of Kerala wood carving is once again clear. The frieze story makes the art of this porch admirable, while a cradle hanging from the ceiling to hold the infant Kṛṣṇa makes it tender.

PLATE 29

The temple of Trichambaram, like all temples, belongs to an established pilgrimage route. Its progression of spaces is not only horizontal but in the sacred sense vertical, for pilgrims seek a great reward. As explained by T.M.P. Mahadevan of the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Madras: "The purified soul gets mystic experiences and finally sees God everywhere, in everything, in every being; and also everything and every being in God. This is the end of devotion."[69]

Chapter Seven

Monuments in Time—An Overview

Temple art may be divided into early, middle, and late phases, as will generally be followed in this study. Or it may be considered in terms of two major periods of efflorescence: from the 9th through 12th centuries including some time after the shift of the Chera capital to Kollam (modern Quilon), and a second period from the 15th through 19th centuries that is marked by the creation of both new religious texts and new architectural forms. The most thorough architectural research yet published is that of H. Sarkar, and his historical framework is utilized below.

Early Chera Temples

Reconstruction of the broad historical context of monuments such as Vilinjam, Tirunandikara, and the related rock-cut temple of Madavurpara might begin with the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* with Pliny, with Ptolemy. But specific reference to temple art comes later, with the first archaeological evidence that confirms local historical happenings being that of early Chera inscriptions from about the 2nd century A.D. found in a rock shelter at Pugaḷūr near Karūr. These are part of a shadowy "Saṅgam Age" that lasts from approximately the 1st through 5th centuries A.D. Roman coins, also found near Karūr in Tiruchchirappalli District of Tamil Nadu, date from 37 to 180 A.D.[70] Śaṅgam times are rich in Tamil literature that is generally assigned to the 2nd century and after.[71] And the Early Chera Dynasty within this age lasted about 100 years after its foundation in about 130 A.D., with its first king being Udayanjeral.[72] The dynasty probably ruled through several branches and it is difficult to trace its centers of rule in early times. Later, however, the Cheras rise to prominence that is equal to that of the Cholas and Pāṇḍyas in South India. Two other early powers are the Āy-veḷs who were referred to by Ptolemy as the Aioi, and the Naṉṉans of northern Malabar. Early Chera art does not fall into Sarkar's classification of Kerala temples because there are no confirmed remains from that time, and since every architectural pattern of early Kerala is traced by M.G.S. Narayan and others to South Indian regions beyond the state. Classification in time is into the early (800–1000), middle (1000–1300), and late (1300–1800) periods, and dynasties from Śaṅgam times forward are listed below.[73] With the Pallavas, Pāṇḍyas, and Cālukyas all claiming control over the area at various times, it should be remembered that the 6th through 8th centuries, like the Śaṅgam age, are years of hazy historical record in Kerala, yet the time is essential for unravelling the

complex crosscurrents of religious influx in the south. Absolutely essential in this is the movement of Brāhmaṇs into Kerala from the north, and it is recorded in the *Avantisundarī Kathāsarā* that Brāhmans travelled south from Kerala to visit Kanchi in the 7th century.[74]

Āy-veḷ Rule

After having been recorded in Śangam literature, the Āy-veḷs reappear in the 8th century just before the beginning of the early phase of temple art. They were in constant conflict with Pāṇḍya armies who attacked the seaport capital of the later Āys and Vilinjam, setting for the early shrines mentioned above. Early Choḷa power also extended into Āy country, as recorded in an inscription of Pārantaka (907–955) at Suchindram. Because of the presence of both these elements from outside, it is difficult to determine the degree of power that was held by the Āy-vel Dynasty itself, or even the exact geographical extent of its rule. Āy power disappears after the reign of Vikramāditya Varaguṇa (880-925 A.D.) as the Choḷas rise in the east and Chera resurgence occurs in the north. Āy territory took the brunt of repeated attacks by successive Choḷa kings, including Rājarāja I (985–1014) and his son Rājendra I (1025–1027), both of whom attacked the *śālai* for benevolent feeding that had been established at Pārthivaśekharapuram in Vilavankod Taluk of present-day Kanyakumari District.

The Ays fought valiantly against the Choḷa invaders, calling upon their tutelary deity, Padmanābhasvamī at Trivandrum, whose praises are sung by Nammāḷvār as part of the most famous Vaisnavite literature of southwest India. The 9th century inscriptions of Karunandadakkaṇ (857–880) record that the king made gifts to Śiva shrines as well as those of Viṣṇu, and mention has already been made of patronage by his Āy-veḷ successor, Vikramaditya Varaguṇa of Buddhist and Jaina establishments.[75] Brāhmaṇical influence was well-established throughout Āy-veḷ times most likely, although K.P.Padmanabha Menon places emigration south into Kerala not earlier than the second half of the 7th or early 8th century, a move that may have begun in the wake of advancing Gupta armies.[76] It was a time of turmoil in terms of society and politics, but the Āy-vel age prepared the way for the growth of temple art as it is known today.

PLATE 30

The Second Chera Dynasty

Overlapping the Ay-veḷ age, Chera power re-emerged around 800 A.D. under king Kulaśekharavarman (800–820 A.D.) with its capital at Mahodayapuram, modern Thiruvanchikulam. The period after the fall of the earlier Chera Dynasty is often called a "long historical night" because of a paucity of reliable records, and perhaps because of the disruption of Pāṇḍya dominance. Details regarding early Chera country and the history of the ruling Chera Perumals from the 7th through the 10th centuries are lost or obscure, but Clifford Reis Jones notes that the Perumals are believed to have been viceroys chosen from royal families outside of Kerala, and elected by Nambūtiri Brāhmans who made up the most powerful

social group of the time. The Nambūtiris themselves were feudal lords who ruled almost like *rājas* while acting as arbiters of Āryan religion and culture. [77]

Kings of the revived Chera Dynasty are important to the history of art, as they are remembered not only as great patrons and devotees, but even as saints. Kulaśekharavarman, a great Visṇu devotee, is identified with Kulasekhara-ālvār, one of twelve famous āḷvār saints and the builder of the Kṛṣṇa temple at Tirukkulaśekharapuram. The king's successor is revered as the Saivite saint Cheramāṉ Perumāḷ Nāyanār and the patron of the Śiva temple at Thiruvanchikulam. [78] And the age is remembered also for the great sage Saṅkarāchārya (788–802 A.D.), born at Kaladi to become teacher, missionary, and Advaita philosopher, who won enormous respect throughout India while having great effect on the evolution of Hinduism. He was a contemporary of the two sainted kings.

The Kulaśekhara period is a time of expanding Bhakti devotion and temple building in Kerala as part of the larger medieval movement that is often referred to as a Hindu renaissance. While political history of the area is sometimes conveniently divided into the "three streams" of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, no such divisions can be made for religious themes or the history of art. In 825 A. D. the Malayālam Era (Kollam Era), based on the solar year, was founded by Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma at Quilon (Kollam),[79] as noted above, and it is still followed today.

Irinjalakuda in Trichur District is another place that is associated with the later Cheras, and its past prominence is proven by a stone inscription found there from the eleventh regnal year of King Sthāṇu-Ravi, 855 A.D. A stone slab in the church of nearby Tāḷakkad belongs to the 9th century also, and by this time Islam had surely begun to contact Kerala, although not as early as 851, according to Sulaiman. Chinese and other international trade supported temple construction in abundance from Chera times forward and the story of the Chera kings from roughly 800 to 1106 A.D. is also the story of the fluorescence of temple arts. [80] By the 10th century stylistic ties to Choḷa art are very clear. The Chera king Kokkandan was a feudatory of Parāntaka Choḷa I, who married a Kerala princess. Artistic evidence of the interrelationship exists in stone *vimāna* temples of purely Dravidian type that are found in southern Kerala, along with individual structural and decorative elements that survived long after the separation of Chola and Chera powers in the 11th/12th centuries. Choḷa style in stone spread as far as Talapalli Taluk near the Palghat Pass where a stone *ekatala* (single storey) temple is found from the 9th or early 10th century.[81]

Mūshika Contributions

The *Mūshika-vaṁśa* is a Sanskrit epic that was recorded in the 11th century by Atula, court poet of the Mūshika king Śrīkaṇṭha. It is translated in the *Travancore Archaeological Series.* [82] With the kind of historical detail that is missing for earlier periods, the work continues the record of construction and renovation of

Brāhmanical temples, as well as Buddhist and Jaina monuments. Vikramarāma is mentioned in the records for his attentions to the seaside monastery of Mūlavāsa as noted at the beginning of this study. Mūshika territory is listed as being mainly in northern Malabar, with the rulers allying themselves with Chera kings during the long competition with Chola power. Mūshika kings had their capital at Kolam, while the Cheras or Kulaśekharas were established at Mahodayapuram in central Kerala and the Āys were based at Vilinjam in the south. Kolam (Pantalayani Kolam) is near Quilandy in Kozhikode District not far from the famous Mount D'Eli, also called Mūshika-parvata. Three inscriptions, all recording donations to temples, have been found in this place which the Śaṅgam poets called Eḻilmalai.[83] Although the Mūshikas came to acknowledge the supremacy of Kulaśekhara power they did have an independent role in the history of Kerala, at least for a time, and this occurred during the essential expansion of temple traditions.

The Veṇāḍu Dynasty in the South

The role of Veṇāḍu power in southern Kerala is not entirely clear, although there are many inscriptions that record the construction and repair of Brāhmaṇical temples during the reigns of Veṇādu kings. The same inscriptions indicate that Nambūtiri Brāhmaṇs enjoyed growing control of local temples and their properties, a reminder that their domination of Kerala religion is a fairly recent phenomenon, evolving during the 12th and 13th centuries and still not entirely complete today. There are some references to Venāḍu rulers as early as the 9th century. The Māmpalli plate of Kollam Era 149 (974 A.D.) records a donation of land to Chengannur temple in Alleppey District and the famous Jewish copper plates of Bhāskara Ravivarman belong to 1000 A.D.[84]

Before Rāmavarman Kulaśekhara shifted his capital from Mahodayapuram to Kollam (Quilon), Veṇāḍu was a small chieftaincy that owed allegiance perhaps to the Kulaśekharas, according to H. Sarkar, with Rāmavarman Kulaśekhara founding a definite line of Venādu rulers as the Kulaśekhara empire proper disintegrated.[85] During the 11th through 13th centuries, Veṇādu rulers carried out repairs that were then needed at temple sites that had been dedicated in the 9th and 10th centuries, and many new monuments were built as well. Kodai Keraḷavarmaṉ (1125–1155) is remembered both for rebuilding the temple of Padmanābhasvāmī in Trivandrum and for his gifts to the southern temple of Suchindram, both being major centers that were always supported by Veṇāḍu royalty.[86] The 12th century saw extension of Hoyśala power into northern Kerala and the assertion of Kerala kings against it. Hoyśala contributions to art are considerable, even pivotal perhaps, in the case of wood carving. Tendency toward great surface elaboration is traced to Hoysala art and temples like those of Belur, Halebid, and Somnathpur, and revealed in Kerala carvings like those at Thiruvanchikulam temple in Trichur. Even as Hoyśala contact was beginning to have major consequences in Kerala, two inscriptions of 1161 A.D. show

PLATE 31

Vira-Ravivarman ruling subject to King Maravarman Srīvallabha of the Pāṇḍya Dynasty. [87]

Zamorin Rule in Calicut and Beyond

If the political prominence of Kozhikode (Calicut) has dwindled somewhat in modern times, it must not be forgotten that this port city and its surrounding territories were of key importance between the fall of the Kulaśekharas and the end of the 18th century. From the 13th century onward, Kerala was "constantly afflicted by centrifugal forces, which tore asunder the political fabric of the country." [88] Approximately 50 chieftaincies of the land were so absorbed in their own rivalries that even the rise of the Vijayanagar empire from about 1336 drew no unified response from Kerala. Nonetheless, a kind of social and religious consistency persisted and temple architecture continued to flourish. When Marco Polo visited Kerala in the late 13th century he made no mention of Zamorin power, but by the 14th century Zamorin rulers had risen to great influence and control. Hoyśala strength had lessened in the north while the 14th century shows much more artistic impact from the Vijayanagar Dynasty to the south.

Under Zamorin supervision, land control was divided between landed classes, including the Nairs, and Brāhmans as feudal lords and priestly custodians over large estates providing for the support of temples. Some Brāhmans functioned like chieftains or *rājas* and competition was intense among a great many local rulers without true states but with jealously guarded private domains. The most prestigious properties were ports, and from them extensive trade networks were maintained with continued special emphasis on trade in spices such as pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger. There were three main political forces in the 14th and 15th centuries and of these the Zamorins of Calicut, with the country's most important port in their control, outmaneuvered the Venādu powers to the south and the Kolattiri Rājas to the north. [89] Calicut was a free port protected by the resident Zamorin, and in the rivalry for trade that had developed between the Chinese and the Arabs, it was with the latter group that the Zamorin allied. Arab forces were supplied with troops as well as ships and horses, for Kerala is home to a long tradition of highly developed military skills.

Arab heritage remains evident today, not only in language, social structure, family names, and general culture, but in a rich tradition of Islamic architecture. The mosques of Calicut city itself are, again, monumental in size and proportion while being delicately finished in ornamentation. Arab alliance gave the Zamorins strength, and H. Sarkar suggests that the unification of Kerala might have been accomplished under their direction were it not for the rise of Cochin as a competing port of trade and political power, along with the arrival in India of the Portuguese.[90]

New Powers, New Alliances

In 1341 the Periyar River flooded seriously and adversely affected the historic port of Cranganur while creating Cochin harbor, which is today one of the most

important ports in India. The Cochin Rāja became a fourth major political figure. As a member of the warrior caste he was held to be inferior to the Zamorin of Calicut who was a Nair. A serious rivalry grew up quickly, and the Cochin ruler needed only a strong ally to raise his office over the heads of other territorial leaders. He found that partner in Vasco da Gama, who landed at Kappakadavu near Calicut on May 27, 1498. Above all, European visitors sought pepper, a crop that was later transplanted to Southeast Asia much to the economic loss of Kerala. The Zamorin refused to grant trading rights to Vasco da Gama, but both the Rāja of Cochin and the Rāja of Kolatiri cooperated fully with the Portuguese as they vied with other foreign powers for control of the lucrative spice trade. The Zamorin meanwhile held fast to his alliance with the Arabs, and Albuquerque was unsuccessful in his attempts to placate him and bring him to the Portuguese side. And indeed the Portuguese instituted horrific policies as their strength grew on the western coast, but their power was less complete in Kerala than in Goa.

The Portuguese were soon followed by the Dutch who also worked to gain monopoly over the pepper trade. The French and the English arrived on the Malabar Coast in pursuit of the same aims, but no single European power gained total control over early Kerala. Christianity spread, with the Roman Catholic church having a rival in the long-established Syrian Christian Church that is still firmly founded in the region. The two branches did not mesh; in fact the Malabar Church faced schism in the controversy regarding possible union. In its own somewhat uneasy balance, Christianity had very little or no effect on the ongoing development of temple arts. Rule by multiple powers, both local and foreign, was undermined by a treaty that was signed by Travancore and Great Britain in the name of the East India Company in 1723, and in 1792 the Treaty of Seringapatam brought Malabar under British control. These are among the last of many agreements between Kerala and various European powers.

The Modern Chapter

The early modern period saw the rise of two illustrious rulers in Travancore: Mārtaṇḍa Varma (1729-1758) and Rāma Varma (1758-1798). Their military prowess came to unite most of Kerala, and the Dutch were defeated at Kolachel in Kanyakumari District on August 10, 1741.[91] To the north, Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan were fearsome invaders from Mysore who are credited with destroying many Kerala temples, but also with introducing certain improved methods of government. As part of the transformation of society, Nair aristocracy lost much of its economic and political potency, and central authority came to undermine feudal order. British control entirely replaced that briefly held by the Mysorean invaders and, again, the institution of temple architecture continued to develop. As the Bhakti movement had given it patronage, piety and competition for prestige helped it to thrive during the reigns of rival *rājas*. Economic progress made the temple affordable, lack of natural disaster kept it stabile, benign rule helped it to

remain culturally and economically viable, the social system made it influential, and Kerala creativity made it beautiful.

Today, regional *devaswom* boards oversee the organization and operation of most temples, including their upkeep and renovation. A state-wide religious body has its headquarters in Trivandrum. In addition, there is a Kerala state office that is loosely charged with supervising temple affairs. Part of the need for unified administration is financial, for certain great temples like Guruvayur bring in enormous amounts of money and precious offerings while other temples are poverty-stricken. There are procedures for distributing gifts beyond major pilgrimage places to other, related temples, and for the care and feeding of devotees who travel far from their homes. Within any given temple there is a committee *(sabha)* with its members *(aryar* or *sabha aryar)* and secretary *(potuval),* all of whom are Brāhmaṇs. Orthodoxy holds on absolutely at most centres, including several that are necessarily omitted from this study, and scholarly research is still best carried out in Kerala by Hindus.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Palaces and Paintings

Calicut

AFTER THE ITALIAN Della Vella accompanied a Portuguese delegation to visit the Zamorin of Calicut in 1623 he drew a rough plan of the impressive palace that he had seen.[92] It shows a rectangular enclosure with large central courtyard, the buildings being mainly apartments for royalty and for guests, with verandahs, balconies, shrine area, subsidiary court, plaza of approach, and a succession of gateways. Its appearance was impressive, far outshining that of the palace of the Cochin Rāja which was described by the Portuguese as presenting the official delegation with "nothing of that State which they met at Calicut. The prince was but meanly clad, and his court had nothing but bare walls with certain seats round them, like a theatre, in one of which Tirumpara sat." [93] It is not surprising that the Portuguese marked their alliance with this tattered ruler by building the Mattancheri palace as a gift. Other palaces are described in early European accounts of travel and adventure in Kerala, but that of the Zamorin of Calicut is most admired in early times. Astley records that soon after his first arrival in the region, Vasco da Gama with his party was taken to the palace of the Zamorin:

> Though built with earth, it was very large and made a handsome appearance, being surrounded with a variety of trees and accommodated with delightful gardens adorned with fountains. Before the palace they found several Kaimals and other noble men who came to receive the General. They passed through five gates, each attended by ten Porters. Become come to the Palace Gate there he met the King's chief Brahman and High Priest a little old man who embraced De Gama and conducted them all in. The Palace within was set round with seats one above another, like a theatre. The floor covered with green velvet, and the walls hung round with silks of several colours. [94]

Stella Kramrisch points out that "the temple, the palace, and the house, in Kerala, represent degrees on drawing on all the resources of structural knowledge and symbolic reference," but also that "what belongs to the Gods is not meet for man, be he even the king." [95] Exterior similarities of monuments are so close that it is hardly surprising that Vasco da Gama and his men were prepared to accept a temple as quite another kind of monument when they first came ashore in Kerala. A famous story is recounted by Menon after Astley as follows:

> The Kotwal [zamorin's minister] brought him to see a temple of the Malabars, which was as large as a great monastery. It was built of freestone, and covered with this. Over the front door there hung seven bells; and before it stood a pillar as high as the mast of a ship (the flagstaff),

made of wire (probably covered with copper sheaths), with a weathercock (the vahana or vehicle of god or goddess) of the same at top. Within it was full of images. This made De Gama and the rest take it for a Christian church...In the wall of this tower was an image, on sight of which the Malabars called out Mary! Whereupon De Gama and the rest, taking it for an image of the Virgin, fell on their knees and prayed. Only one, Juan de Sala, who had some doubt of the matter, in making his genuflexions said, 'If this be the Devil, I worship God,' which made De Gama smile. They would not see the statue distinctly, the Tower being dark within, nor were they permitted to go near enough to examine it.[96]

Mattancheri: Synagogue, Temple, Palace

Mattancheri palace was built by the Portuguese in 1555 and it took on the popular name "Dutch palace" after renovation and additions by the Dutch around 1663. The Dutch were also to build the island Bolghatti palace at Mulavukad off the Ernakulam Coast in 1744 as residence for their Governor until it was taken over by the British in 1795. The original Mattancheri structure of three storeys was presented to Rāja Vira Kerala Varma (1537–65) as ruler of Cochin, and it incorporates in its enclosed courtyard a temple of Pazhayunnur Bhagavatī as tutelary deity of the royal family. Other shrines, of Viṣṇu and Śiva, are in the compound and there is a large tank on the western side.

PLATE 32

The famous Cochin synagogue, built in 1567, is next door to the palace and almost within its grounds as reminder that the Hindu territory was much enriched by its long cooperation with the Jewish community. The synagogue contains the aforementioned copper plates of Bhaskara Ravi Varma, recorded as being given to Joseph Rabban, "Leader-Prince" of the Cranganore Jewish community whose family came from Yemen, no later than 1000 A.D. and probably at the time of the 10th century Choḷa-Chera war.

The synagogue itself is elaborately decorated with crystal chandeliers and carved wood, with blue and white ceramic tiles that were made in Holland covering its floor. Like other synagogues in Kerala, it is marked by having a *teba* or *bimah* (pulpit) on a balcony overlooking the main room at its back side, plus another in the center of the synagogue. Within the hall, sacred scrolls of the *torah* written on sheepskin are kept inside gold and silver cases, some of which were gifts from the Rāja of Cochin. The building, properly known as the Pardesi Synagogue, was built by Samuel Castiel, David Belileah Ephrahim Sala and Joseph Levi, all foreigners. The synagogue members included old residents of Cochin, with some 447 native converted slaves and 221 "white" Jews in their number in 1817. Earlier, in 1686 a list of 14 heads of "white" families and 11 "brown" or "mulatto" families was recorded. Among the latter are three heads of families and two ladies from the Royal House of Rabban, and the figures prove that the monument cannot be considered to have been the exclusive province of White Jews, as is sometimes erroneously suggested. Like other religious monuments in Kerala, the synagogue is absorbed and in some ways changed by its setting. Historical sources point to the beginning of this process at least as early as the 4th century A.D.

PLATE 33

Between the synagogue and the palace stands a circular temple of large size with a cone roof of impressively pure form in contrast to the pattern of the synagogue bell tower nearby. More significant are the shrines that are located within the palace compound itself.[97] Finest art is lavished upon the carved wooden structure of the top floor chambers, notably that of the coronation hall that was made under Dutch patronage, and famous murals splash the walls with colorful Hindu story. Paintings totalling about 1000 square feet in area and dating from the early 17th through mid-19th century are found in a large rectangular room on the west side of the palace, in four chambers upstairs, and in two low-ceilinged rooms below that are entered by a steep stairway.

PLATE 34

PLATE 35

The western room is the Palliyara or Bed Chamber and its 48 pictures, 300 square feet in area, treat mainly the *Rāmāyaṇa* story, from the sacrifice of Dasaratha to Rāma's return from Laṅka.[98] The last five scenes are from the *Kṛṣṇa Lila* and are later in date. Together they are the earliest paintings in the palace, dating perhaps as early as 1600 A.D.,[99] but certainly not after the 17th century. Like all of the murals they are damaged, attributed by P. Anujan Achan to the making of wall plaster with local river sand compounded with lime without any fibrous admixture of jute or hemp, which makes the plaster less tenacious than it should be.[100] In Kerala, however, two methods of mural painting are differentiated by changes in colors and binding materials. Colors that are applied to lime plaster surfaces in early paintings include yellow (Cadmium sulphide) called Menewala in Kerala, red vermillion (Mercuric sulphide) called Chaeliyam, green, indigo, black, and white. The pigments are finely ground and mixed with coconut water and a binder made from red seeds *(Arbus precatorius)*. In later works, the bright red and yellow colors are replaced by ochre pigments, and the binder is replaced by gum arabic or other weaker substance, affecting the paint so that "the colours with a little friction in these paintings come out."[101] Black color is made by mixing alum with water and placing a piece of iron and a piece of Hartaki *(Terminalia chebula)* in it overnight. Further aspects of the method will be detailed in following sections.

Kerala mural painting is remembered much more for its style than for its technique, and the Bed Chamber paintings of Mattancheri are a fine introduction to the art. The walls are often designed as a series of scenes or pictures, but in fact the narration is quite continuous, with surfaces having the kind of unity that characterizes fine tapestries. Browns, golds, and red-browns are the dominant hues, without varnish or fixatif, and these are set off by touches of green, grass-colored and jewel-like. The malachite and gold scheme is rich, even precious in appearance. And painted details of costume, jewelry, landscape, and physique are so delicate as to be lacy. Yet there is nothing weak or superfluous about the total wall design. Rather, it is bold and forceful.

Line is of unvarying width at Mattancheri whether functioning to define contour or to make surface patterns. It is very precise, beginning with first a

PLATE 36

yellow, and then a red underpainting or sketch which may be corrected and superimposed in the planning stages. This tradition is suggestive of painting procedures in Śrī Laṅka. The line is filled with color to describe shapes, and then shading is added to describe volumes as the outline is reinforced with black. Shadow is created by stippling, the use of precise dots, and not by dark washes or "shades" of color. Indigo is used sparingly as an occasional accent on light-colored figures. White paint is not used, but white plaster wall areas may be left unpainted as background or foreground, and a painted surface may be scratched away so that the underlying white plaster can act as a highlight. Few pastel hues are used, while the primary colors of red, yellow, and blue are also infrequent. Kerala provides a special palette that is rich and luxurious, yet lively. It is quite unlike that of other parts of India, including Tamil Nadu.

Other rooms in Mattancheri Palace include eastern chambers, also rectangular, across the considerable space of the rosewood-covered main hall that is entered by way of a steep stairway, and an entrance porch with finely carved and painted ceiling. The first of these eastern chambers is brilliantly marked by fabulous scenes of Viṣṇu and Siva iconography, and just beyond it to the left is a small room with an unfinished image of Visṇu as Vaikunthañatha, a "faithful copy" of a painting enshrined at Purnathrayisa temple of Thrippunithura.[102] It is among the latest works in the palace, and its color, especially the blue, is dense and rather harsh just as the size of the physical figure has itself become large and forceful. The painting remains exciting and bold in the palace tradition.

PLATE 37

Other late paintings in the palace represent Mahālakṣmi and Bhutanātha, Kirātamūrti, the Coronation of Śrī Rāma, Siva and Pārvatī with Ardhanariśvara and other goddesses, Visṇu as Anantaśayanamūrti, Guruvavurappan, Kṛṣṇa lifting Mt. Govardhana, Kṛṣṇa reclining on a couch with his flute and surrounded by *gopīs* attendants, Pārvatī riding toward Śiva on the bull while he is dallying with Gaṅgā, Viṣṇu as Mohinī before Śiva, and Śiva with Pārvatī on Mount Kailāsa. Especially useful is a series of unfinished paintings, really line drawings in red, that portray the marriage of Pārvatī on the lower level that is reached by stairs. Its draftsmanship is crisp and sure, illustrating the kind of brush facility that is usually associated with miniature painting in India. They are easy to analyze in their exactness, and they are the polar opposite of more "finished" works. Facility of line equals the best in Indian art anywhere.

PLATE 38

On the opposite side of the Coronation Hall at Mattancheri is located the Kovinithalam or Staircase Room (Room II) with three complete paintings and one incomplete work that belong to the worship of Devī, Śiva, and Viṣṇu. R.V. Poduval dates them later, to the eighteenth century for panels 13, 14, and 16 and to about 1800 for the others. The room is named for a staircase descent to the aforementioned lower storey and two rooms that were used for ladies of the royal house. The marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī is represented in Room Number IV featuring exactly the story of Kumārasambhava as told by Kālidāsa. Unfortunately, the unfinished works were whitewashed.

PLATE 39

PLATE 40

Over 100 square feet of mural paintings mark Room Number V, one set showing scenes from the *Kṛṣṇa Līla* while a second set treats Śiva stories, including that of the god dallying with Viṣṇu Māya as Mohinī. At the borders of the works are found remarkable action studies of animals, including mating scenes. Other figures here are of Kirātamūrti in the form of Kiratha as hunter presenting the weapon of Paśupati to Arjuna for destruction of the Kauravas, Viṣṇu as Yogāsanamūrti on the serpent Adiseśa, Mahālaksmī and Bhutanātha, Viṣṇu as Bhogāsanamūrti and Hiranyagarbha, etc. [103]

PLATE 41

Line not only describes figures in Kerala painting, it "costumes" them in details that reinforce their action and expression. Outline may be doubled, with a white line trapped between two boundaries, or it may be made up of a running border of interconnected dots, again white with black boundaries. The result is a staccato-like frame for every major character, demarcations of "electric lights" that flash around the active figures. The impression is indeed dramatic, yet puzzling at the same time, for these decorative boundaries seem to appliqué the figures onto a flat matrix of color. They are linear, unquestionably two-dimensional. Yet the bodies set off by these sharp patterns are themselves illusionistically three-dimensional. They are fleshy, inflated, convincingly volumetric. Tension results between the flat and the round, the patterned and the "real." And that tension adds to the theatrical impact of exaggerated supernatural characters who act out extraordinary dramas. They cannot be fully understood without reference to theatrical traditions that are touched upon in other sections of this study.

Padmanābhapuram

The single best known monument of Kerala civilization is probably Padmanābhapuram Palace, located 33 miles southeast of Trivandrum and now in Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu, but historically part of Kerala. Its importance as a royal site is traced back to 1335 by R.V. Poduval, but the standing structure is mainly of the 16th through 18th centuries, times that were a great international age for southern India. It was always a center for contact between the Mahārāja and visitors from abroad, as well as a place of counsel and discussion between the ruler and his advisors. It was a judicial center and the setting of great ceremony, both around its own interior shrines and in conjunction with the temple of Nilkaṇṭhasvāmi, a major Tamil Nadu-style monument that is very nearby. This latter building, while not properly belonging to the subject of this work, must be admired as a fine example of the monumental "closed" style of tower architecture as it developed in the southern kingdoms that neighbored Kerala, and it is included in the temple listing that follows. Its aesthetic is different, more otherworldly and more overpowering, than that of the more homely, less lofty, and perhaps more approachable structures of Kerala.

PLATE 42

PLATE 43

One is reminded once again at Padmanābhapuram that temples and palaces of Kerala may be seen as "super houses." The grounds within the high defensive

walls of granite and laterite at Padmanābhapuraṁ, 2½ miles in perimeter, are landscaped and open. Gardens and courtyards of the palace are like those of domestic compounds but on a large scale. And any builder would understand the principles of pent roof construction, balcony assembly, pierced window configuration and ventilating gable usage that are employed at the palace.

PLATE 44

Only the finest hardwoods are used, and they are always carefully carved and highly polished in the palace, but they are still familiar to any prosperous homeowner. It is not so much for grandeur that the palace is impressive, but rather for meticulous craftsmanship. As example, one might look to a pillar support in one corner of the Thai Kottaram, oldest building in the compound. From a base of square granite rises a plain wooden shaft that opens into four radiating brackets like tree branches with volutes that terminate in inverted lotus buds. [104] The style of the 7½ foot pillar recalls Vijayanagar and Madurai arts, but the elegant carving nonetheless speaks of Kerala. [105] J.H. Cousins describes it as "a kind of roof-tree with bole bare half way up, and, with a preliminary hint of coming growth, spreading out in branches that give support, and in leaves and flowers that add delight," and at the same time speaks of its "artistic affluence and almost self-conscious perfection of design and execution that marks the summit of an era with a long ascending path of tradition." [106] A detail of the column, the sort that brings joy to tour guides, is a movable ring inside and among the petals of one dropping lotus pendant. It is a ring cut from the original wood without being removed from its floral nest, and it can be turned by hand within the flower. *Tour-de-force* carving indeed, but such craftsmanship is not allowed to suffocate the column under the weight of its own gorgeousness. Petal borders and enrolled vegetal volutes of the ceiling beams, for example, do not interrupt the integrity of structural parts. And wooden surfaces having the understated beauty of mere polish far outnumber those that are elaborately carved in the hall, so that those pieces of furniture that are clearly of Chinese inspiration if not actual craftsmanship, like the clean-lined throne of the council chamber, appear quite at home in the space. The most romantically exuberant carvings, on the other hand, are probably those that are lavished upon the wooden bed of the 18th century that is in the *uppirikka malika,* a three-storeyed building on the front side of the palace. Its legs, baseboard, headboard, and four posts bear many kinds of fruits, along with soldiers, cupids, eagles, snakes, crests, crosses, foliage, and volutes that reveal the bed as a kind of banquet of international tastes.

PLATE 45

PLATE 46

PLATE 47

Simple features of Malabar architecture that are found in the palace, and in folk traditions, include pointed gables, dormer windows, and long corridors. There is no single building that is meant to strike awe in the visitor (the *uppirikka malika* is fairly low) but there is a multiplication of well-proportioned structures harmoniously leading one to the other. There is no processional space as such, no grand promenade within the great walls. Ceremonial pomp would appear to be better suited to the outer surroundings of the walled compound than its interior.

PLATE 48

Inside the 186-acre complex there is space for living, and large numbers of guests frequently resided there. After about 1750 and the removal of the capital to Trivandrum by Mahārāja Mārtāṇḍa Varma (1728–1758 A.D.), with its protective temple of Padmanābhasvāmi, the importance of Padmanābhapuram gradually faded away. But in early times it was famed for its culture and learning, being called the Ujjain of the South. The center was still described as prosperous during the reign of Karthika Thirunal Rāma Varma (1758-98 A. D.), successor to Mārtāṇḍa Varma, and its state of preservation is good today.

R.V. Poduval, best known figure in the scholarship of Kerala archaeology and art history, describes the main features of Padmanābhapuram as follows:[107]

a. *Thaikottaram :* Oldest of the palace structures with open verandah *(ekatha-mantapa)* with particularly fine wooden pillars. An annual 41-day festival of Durgā is celebrated here in December/January, marked by the drawing of her image on the ground with a mixture of rice flour, turmeric, charcoal and other substances. Large earthenware jars made of Travancore clay with glazes in dark earth colors remain in this space as reminders of oriental workmanship from times before the Chinese were driven out of their settlement in Quilon by the Portuguese.[108]

b. *Navarathri Mantapa:* A spacious hall, with pillars of granite carved with images of Hindu deities that recalls Vijayanagar style rather than indigenous Kerala design. A small shrine of Sarasvatî is connected to it by a pillared porch, and the hall was used for dance and musical performances. A private apartment built of wood on the east side of the hall has perforated shutters and screens that allowed ladies of the court to witness the events without being seen. The hall is a cool space, and a somewhat foreign one.

c. *Mantrasala* or council chamber: Located above the portico or main entrance of the palace proper, and already mentioned above, this is a small spacious room of diffused light that enters through perforations in the walls, some of which are filled with thin slices of amber-colored stone. Benches are built into the rectangular council space that extends as a balcony with curved and slatted walls, and the seat of the king is freestanding and portable. The materials are teak and rosewood, with all surfaces highly polished. The ceiling is coffered.

PLATE 49

The *Mantrasala* is topped by a clock tower that holds a remarkable instrument. Legend recounts that the clock, more than 200 years old, was made by a local blacksmith who pretended to be blind and was taken to Europe by some Spanish priests. While there he studied clock-making, later returning to Kerala to make the clock for the ruler at Padmanābhapuram. For this act he was given tax-free lands as reward. The clock is one of very few parts of the palace that has no counterpart in temple art.

d. *Uttupura* (dining hall): A very large rectangular hall adjoining the council chamber, this space is large enough to seat as many as 2000 who are fed through charity. The tradition is an old one, especially for religious pilgrims, that still continues in Kerala as Dharma Rajya, the "Land of Charity." The dining

hall is covered with a pent roof but it has no dropped ceiling, so that the plain understructure is clearly visible. The floor is coated and buffed to a high shine. It is possible to look down upon surrounding courtyards and out toward adjoining tiled roofs and balconies through the slatted windows of the hall, but it is a place for eating and not for relaxation or observation.

e. *Indra Vilas:* This palace building is located behind the *uppirikka malika* tower and it is attributed to the patronage of Dalava Ramayyan, Prime Minister to Mārtānda Varma, founder of modern Travancore. Distinguished visitors were brought for royal audience to this place, including Fr. Paulinus, the missionary who wrote a grammar for the study of English, Portuguese, and Malayālam at the king's request late in the 18th century. This building saw the signing of a treaty that linked the Zamorin of Calicut and the Rāja of Cochin as perpetual allies to the Travancore royal family of south Kerala in 1763, an event that ended many centuries of disunity on the Malabar coast.

The above constructions are those that are especially picked out by Poduval, but others may be noted as well. And the total spatial experience of Padmanābhapuram must be recognized as complex and challenging. The enclosing walls of the royal grounds and their fort are themselves impressive as they vary in height with the topography from 15 to 25 feet, with a lower portion of granite and the upper 8 feet of their height made of laterite. They are at least 3 feet thick throughout, with four main bastions at the corners of the fort and four major gateways, one in each wall, plus three smaller gateways near three of the bastion towers. Tanks for irrigation and palace use are also major constructions at the site, and located outside of the walls is a dam/reservoir *(neerazhi kettu),* southern palace *(thekke kottaram),* guard rooms, royal stable, and mint. A sketch plan based upon Survey Office drawings of Trivandrum[109] indicates the interrelationship of buildings within the palace grounds. Their visual impression is of horizontal design punctuated by stately towers and numerous "Malabar gables" and projecting balconies that are made of richly carved and pierced wood.

PLATE 50

It is useful to examine the fine gable of the palace entrance portico while considering J.H. Cousins' evaluation of the Kerala gable type in general. Upon considering the triangular design of the gable, Cousins differentiates between ordinary decoration as a kind of pleasant diversion for the eye and the art of "expressive decoration" that involves equalized forms and symbolical relationships embodying the "collaboration of the outer eye with the inner in the expression of intangible and invisible ideas."[110] Expressive decoration is, then, seen as symbolic in intent, and the Malabar gable must be judged for more than its beautiful rhythms and practical function in providing ventilation. The former Art Advisor of the Government of Travancore explains further that the first impression of the gable is of delicate balance. The second impression is of the "complete avoidance of the temptation offered by a triangle to follow it out in three figures." The third impression shows the "secret" of design as the involved

PLATE 51

triplicity of the gable is interpreted in accordance with its functions. Most important of these is to carry off rain, and so "33 beads on each side of the barge-board" [or other running designs such as the enrolled floral patterns that are found at the palace] mask the beam that supports the gable and lead the eye down from apex to base "like drops of rain running along a telegraph wire." Another important design preference places vertical elements of the gable, whether structural or decorative, further back than the barge-boards in order to make them less prominent than the sloping portions. From the front, a gable appears to be almost self-supporting; it is physically as well as visually light. Like the humble carvings of bullock-cart axles, the lines of many parts of buildings on gables, balcony railings, tile faces—are curved. And so, curvilinear undulations bring grace and softness to the rectangular scheme of architecture in houses, palaces, and temples. The swelling walls of the council chamber at Padmanābhapuram, for example, have an almost organic quality, with its interior likened to a basket containing pillars. For all its dignity, the palace might best be summarized by the lively carved lizards that crawl up the doorframe of the formal entry. Cousins, in his analysis, recalls the words of the English poet Herbert E. Palmer: "All that is moulded of iron has led to destruction and blood; But things that are honored of Zion are most of them made from wood."

Paintings in Padmanābhapuram are a highpoint in the development of Kerala mural art, which has been briefly noted here to have begun in rock shelter paintings of prehistory, then to have conveyed Hindu iconography in the fragments at Tirunandikkara, and reached full elaboration at Mattancheri Palace. The works at Padmanābhapuram largely belong to the 17th and 18th centuries, and they are found mainly in the sacred bedroom that is devoted to Viṣṇu on the upper floor of the four-storey tower. The room is small and dark, with shuttered windows that open onto a surrounding balcony. A perpetual lamp burns there, near a large canopied bed that is meant to provide rest to the god himself. The ceiling of the room is low, and access to the space by a narrow stairway is difficult. But the room is a treasure house of late medieval painting. The kinds of sweeping compositions of Mattancheri are replaced here by smaller scenes, framed and separated from each other by painted borders, and the color scheme is lighter in tone than at Mattancheri, with more pastels and greater use of white. The stories remain sacred and the mood devout, while the expression of characters is less theatrical. There are murals on all four walls in multiple registers. Fifty scenes portray individual deities and stories from the *Purāṇas*.

PLATES 52, 53

Scenes at Padmanābhapuram, such as those showing Siva and Pārvatī at rest or Kṛṣṇa playing his flute for the *gopīs,* are densely crowded and flatter than what had appeared before. They date from the 16th century and after, like the murals at Mattancheri, but they are more textile-like, and somehow frozen in their patterns. The "electric light" outlines seem to lack some of their voltage.

The size of the paintings and the room that shelters them is small, resulting in

a certain loss of impact even though a total area of 900 square feet is painted. They are confined by their setting and subdued by their packed compositions. At the same time the faces of the figures are more mask-like than was true at Mattancheri. A sameness pervades their smiling number. Emotions are restrained; the impromptu kiss of Śiva at Mattancheri would be out of place here. Brushwork remains very skilled with an overall effect of filigree, but the tension that existed between two-dimensional pattern and illusionistic form at Mattancheri is no longer so evident, for volume has largely been cloaked in line. Krishna Chaitanya terms the Padmanābhapuram style "baroque mannerism."[111] At the same time he points out that, "the decorative tendency is in control and the compositional scheme emerges with coherence out of the filigreed surface." Perhaps a clue to the changed mood or theme of the palace paintings is that, according to Chaitanya, "the single figures have a tendency to be statuesque and immobile like the idols in temples." Whatever the stylistic evolution, the sacred Bed Chamber remains a key monument because of the didactic clarity, elaboration, brilliant color, and evocative luxury of its murals.

Late Palaces

Kṛṣṇapuram Palace in Kayamkulam, north of Quilon is built like a smaller version of Padmanābhapuram, and it holds a wall painting that measures 14 feet by 11 feet high (154 square feet). The mural, representing Gajendramokṣa, is presumed to date from the time of the construction of the palace about 1725–40. It is not finished, but it is very effective, with the wings of Garuḍa flamboyant and powerful as they fan out below a dignified image of Viṣṇu. It is clear that evolution continues in the late stages of Kerala painting, and not only in terms of various borrowings from Europe. Stella Kramrisch takes part of the work to its antecedents by remarking that, "The image of Ganesha deviates but little from what must have been its more ancient mould. The modelling has increased in roundness, larger masses of shade are spread from its outlines inward, but it remains a modelling as if of sculpture, productive of a rounded shape irrespective of any source of light; this is how the Gods of India have been bodied forth in the classical paintings."[112] And if minor figures, like some devotees in the lower part of the painting, do reveal European influence, they cannot keep the wall painting from being, like the large Viṣṇu at Mattancheri palace, an essentially Kerala creation. Kṛṣṇa with his flute looks like a local deity in a rendition on the wall of an adjoining porch, and the great Garuḍa is clearly a cousin of intense counterparts painted in Trichur and Mattancheri.[113]

PLATE 54

At Kuttippuram in Calicut District stands the small but imposing palace of the Rāja of Kudathanadu, two storeys high and rectangular in plan with typical courtyards that gather light and water. The temple of the palace is located on a hill behind the main structure in an area that was once fortified, serving as a reminder that ordinary kings usually established their capitals atop hills. The palace is built like a *nalukettu* house, but on its upper floor is a religious work of art

that is suited only to a royal or sacred dwelling. The painting represents Viṣṇu Anantasayin in large size and international style. It is probably in the same stylistic category as late 18th century paintings on temples at Panayannarkavu near Mannar that R.V. Poduval terms "decadent."[114] Similarly the arched walls around the courts give the palace a vaguely Mediterranean air, even amid its coconut gardens.

Other late palaces are like Kṛṣṇapuram in being quite typical in terms of their structures, which are always basically rectangular and built around courtyards and light-wells in the tradition of *nalukettu* (four-winged) houses. After the 18th century shift of the capital to Trivandrum, numerous royal buildings were put up there, mainly in the vicinity of the national temple of Padmanābha-svāmi. Those near the temple are, like the sacred monument itself, off-limits to non-Hindus, but it may be recorded here that some of the buildings contain important paintings and woodcarvings. The Karuvelappuramāḷika Palace in the fort area is said to have a fine combination of carved and structural parts,[115] and Kankakannu Palace was used as a guest house until the mid-20th century.

The modern Kaudiyār Palace is still a residence of the former Mahārāja. This building shows considerable stylistic borrowing from western traditions in such elements as its stairways and bannisters, furnishings, garden design, gazebos, etc. The golf pavilion, still in public use, is a curious blend of European elements (the pillars and window types) and Kerala parts (steep roofs, tiles, carved ceiling). The sum is hybrid but charming in the way of fantasy or stage-set architecture. The same might be said of the conglomerate Sculpture Gallery of the Trivandrum Museum, built around 1880, but this structure is airy, functional, and an intriguing artwork in its own right. Balcony forms with bay windows and supporting *vyāli* monsters here were directly inspired by Padmanābhapuram palace architecture, the ceiling structure is like that of the palace dining hall described there, and the gable roof forms are like those illustrated throughout this study. The museum is one of the final expressions of "palace" design in South India, and it is complemented by a smaller and more recent building nearby, the Southeast Asia gallery, which is crowned by pierced, openwork tiles along the ridgepole, a rare variation upon traditional roof patterns. The Srī Chitralaya Art Gallery is another palatial structure, small and intimate, which houses an important collection of paintings. Included among them are many works of Rāja Rāja Varma and his nephew Rāja Ravi Varma, whose 19th century oil paintings in European style, made under the tutelage of the English portrait painter Theodore Jenson, herald a change of direction for Kerala painting that was so drastic as to interrupt the evolution of local styles. His fame for portraits, genre scenes such as "Nayar Lady at her Toilette" of 1874, and Hindu religious illustrations in European mode is unparalleled in modern South India. He is mentioned here because the taste for imported arts, although long part of Malabar Coast culture, has never been stronger than in the 19th and 20th centuries.

PLATE 55

Chapter Nine

Temples of the North
First Experiences in Cannanore

The northern districts of kerala—Cannanore, Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Palghat—are not as well known for temple art as are other parts of the state. This is due to the fact that Malabar and Travancore existed as separate states until the mid-20th century, with most published research appearing in the southern area where royal patronage supported it. Secondly, strongly Muslim regions of the north have somewhat fewer temples than other areas. And thirdly, northern university facilities for the study of local history are not yet as developed as those in the south. Population centers are not as large, although all of Kerala is heavily populated, and transportation is somewhat more difficult. Nonetheless, northern Kerala shelters remarkable folk arts of all kinds, living traditions of temple theatre, oral and written literature of great subtlety and depth. In art there is an extraordinary taste for colorful architecture, exemplified by the silver painted Cathedral of Calicut, by dazzling churches of all kinds, by rich green and yellow mosques, and by houses painted ice blue, lavender, or pink. Few parts of India can equal this northern Kerala taste for polychromy, as has been noted.

The south central portion of the Indian coast from Cannanore District into Goa is little recognized for its traditional temple architecture and therefore much in need of study. The same is still true to some degree of Cannanore and this study will treat only three monuments of that district: Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple at Taliparamba, the nearby temple of Taliparamba Śiva, and the Kanjirankode Siva temple. Their place in the historical evolution of temple art will not be discussed at this point; emphasis will instead be on their form and function.

Taliparamba Siva (Cannanore District) and Sacred Pattern

The Taliparamba Siva temple is imposing because of its considerable size, the large entry pavilion of its inner approach, the sculptural quality of its complex exterior with architectural projections and niches, its large-scale strut sculptures below the roofs, and its painted white color that emphasizes effects of light and shadow. As an introductory subject to the analysis of individual temples, it is disconcerting, for on first glance this temple seems to have little in common with domestic or palace architecture, It makes less "sense" structurally, for its upper floor is not functional, nor are the dozens of false windows and doors that embrace the entire *srikovil* or main shrine building. There is more color on the building than on those previously seen, as under the overhanging roofs, and it is covered

PLATES 56, 57

with copper plates. Further, laymen are not allowed to enter the *srikovil* door. How, then does this kind of structure relate to other architecture in Kerala?

Firstly, the materials are largely the same at Taliparamba as in houses or palaces. A granite base *(adhiṣṭhāna)* is its foundation, and its court is paved with the same stone. This part of the structure is always a key to dating, for the *adhiṣṭhāna, bhitti* (wall), and *prastara* (entablature over the wall) are the only parts of a given temple that are likely to survive the passage of time. Walls that rise from the granite base are made of laterite, plastered and whitewashed for preservation. The roof structure is made in simple post-and-lintel fashion of hardwoods, and it is high pitched for rain runoff. Ventilation gables are part of rectangular subsidiary structures around the *srikovil.* And the compound consists of many related buildings within a walled courtyard. All of these factors relate the temple to structures outside. In fact, this monument is sometimes used to stand for evolution of Kerala design from early patterns that were largely borrowed.

The temple of Taliparamba Śiva is removed from the ordinary world by being more "finished" and less practical than other kinds of architecture. The Kirata story is carved upon its walls. Its associated structures are mainly intended for prayer, prostration, offering, and song, not for ordinary pursuits. There is no garden within its inner wall *(prākāra)*, only the pristine paved courtyard covered with stone. Movement is circular in clockwise direction around the *srikovil,* in a *pradakṣiṇā-patha* or circumambulatory path of ritual. A projecting drainage channel spout *(praṇāla)* carries blessed liquid out into the courtyard from the inner room *(garbha gṛha)* of the *srikovil,* to force reverse ritual movement. And it is a building complex adorned with semi-precious and precious materials, like the copper of its lacy roof borders and snake forms at the corners of the *srikovil* roofs, and the gold or gilt-bronze of its pinnacles. Supporting roof brackets are elaborately carved, and lathe-turned wooden pendants hang from the underside of its roofs with no function whatever. After what has gone before, the monument is familiar and strange at the same time.

Kanjirankode Śiva (Cannanore District) as Modest Statement

Kanjirankode Śiva is a smaller and more compact temple grouping than that of Taliparamba Śiva, appearing almost village-like within its low and plain outer *prākāra* and unpainted inner *prākāra* wall. It hugs the surrounding fields as statement of the humble proportions of most temples in Kerala, and it has no tall flagstaff, so common in southern Kerala, to interrupt its low-rise silhouette. All of its roofs are covered with ordinary tile except for the second and top roof of the square *srikovil,* and there is less here to dazzle the eye than at the previous site. Wooden pillars and railings are fairly plain, but the construction of the louvered entry *maṇḍapa* is elaborate, from the outward slanting walls beneath its upper roof to the four pillars of each gabled end, complete with eight leonine brackets of *vyāla* form. And the walls of the *srikovil* are marked by niches, false windows, and false doors with some paintings at the lower level where much plaster has fallen

away to expose the underlying laterite. Still, the sacred building is more subdued and humble in appearance than most monuments of similar size to be found in Kerala. By representing understatement in northern Kerala design, it is not far removed from domestic traditions.

Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa (Cannanore District), Its Walls and Ceiling Elements

As dramatic as the above monument is subdued, the large temple complex of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa is located in Taliparamba Taluk in former Mūshika territory. The inner temple has a simple plan with square *srikovil* opening to the east and an attached *mukha maṇḍapa* as porch of prayer and offering.[116] The exterior of the *srikovil* proper is 27 feet square but its interior room, the *garbha gṛha* with its image of Viṣṇu, measures only 6 feet square. The porch is 15 feet square and the detached *namaskāra maṇḍapa* is 21 feet square. The structures are not large, but they are made fabulous by carved and painted embellishments of their surfaces. Kerala never quite produces the explosive polychrome of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, and temple walls never become moving sculptural masses as at Somnathpur in Karnataka; rather, volume and polychrome are subservient accents in architectural statements, no matter how dramatic they may be.

The main building of the Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple rests on a base of granite but the rest of the walls are made of laterite, just as in the first two northern examples. The wall surface is marked by a *praṇāla* protuberance above the *kaṇṭha* moulding level of the *adhiṣṭhāna,* and a *vedika* "railing" element intervenes between the foundation and the *bhitti* or wall proper. Each of these provides indication of the temple's place in time. Traces of mural paintings remain on the plastered walls, representing standing deities and guardians in full color and probably belonging to the 15th/16th centuries,[117] but these are almost lost in the volumetric complexity of walls that are made porous, almost sponge-like, by their wealth of assembled architectonic parts.

Specifically, the walls are divided into five bays having *ghana-dvāras* (false doors) with *makara-torana* coverings of water symbolism in place of lintels, and each bay holds a *toraṇa* topped by a *śāla-śikhara* or barrel vault roof form. On either side of each of these is a *brahma-kānta* or rectangular pilaster carrying cross-corbels of *taraṅga* roll type. Grilled openings, pierced to allow minimal light to enter the building, grace the recesses of the walls. Many mouldings are carved around the walls including *uttara* (beam-type) and narrow *vajana* varieties. H. Sarkar notes that mouldings of *haṁsa-valabhi* type, representing sacred geese in profile, are not preferred in Mūshika country despite the proximity of the powerful Gaṅga Dynasty to the south, under which the pattern was much in vogue.[118] He also notes that this temple displays a *kapota* or overhanging "pigeon" cornice with *nāsikā* arched openings that contain human faces. Above these appear a row of leonine *vyālas.* The *hāras* ("garlands") as rows of miniature shrines in the position of parapets on the two storeys have wooden bracket figures around them which are called "undoubtedly a later embellishment."[119] A drawing in K.V. Soundara

Rajan, *Temple Architecture in Kerala*, helps to clarify this composite wall treatment.[120] The oldest part of the temple is datable to the 10th/11th centuries A.D., and renovations were carried out in the 14th/15th centuries and 17th/18th centuries.[121]

Late or not, the wooden brackets under the double roof coverings are of major importance to the subject of this study. Architectonic parts of the wall are elaborately categorized, and classical explanations are required to clarify their origin and meaning. But the wooden bracket figures speak for themselves. Like brackets of traditional wooden buildings in Gujarat, these elements are not essential for physical stability, and their angle of placement is more nearly vertical than in Nepal, for example, where such members are structurally necessary. The visual impact of the forms is great, and they function to convey specific religious messages to devotees. Here the Hindu pantheon is represented as forcefully as in other medieval building traditions, and it still survives in wood.

PLATE 59

Strut (bracket) carvings here have been noted for showing the exploits of Kṛṣṇa. The western (back) side of the building shows at its lower roof level the mother of Kṛṣṇa in advanced pregnancy, then Kṛṣṇa as newborn child, then his abduction by the demon Trinavarta, and finally his suckling of the poisonous demoness Putana. As one continues around the temple, the carvings are seen to include images of Kṛṣṇa with two *gopis,* the deity fighting the giant crane-demon Bakasura, and Kṛṣṇa subduing the serpent Kāliya. Again, the upper roof has images on each side, with central figures representing Brahmā on the east, Siva on the south, Narasiṃha on the west, and Vaikunthanāth on the north. The struts with Kṛṣṇa subjects are most remarkable, as represented by an example that conveys the god's irresistible charm as he makes music in the forest. The well-known theme is portrayed in an especially graceful and rhythmic way as Kṛṣṇa is shown to play his flute high in the branches of a slender tree while a group of *gopis* who adore him stand at the base of the tree below, with their supple arms raised in gestures of supplication and longing. Absolute symmetry is avoided (the gestures of the females could easily have mirrored each other) and Kṛṣṇa himself stands off of the central axis of the tree. Birds above his head are elegantly poised and, in the best heritage of Indian sculpture, all surface volumes are sensuous. The bracket compositions are quite complex in general, and their northern Kerala style is recognizable in the elongation of crowns and haloes worn by the figures into very large backplates that recall the headdresses that are part of the costumes of certain schools of northern dance-drama in Kerala. Viṣṇu and Brahmā are shown with individual additions of this kind, for example, while less exhaulted figures or groups may communicate from large multi-colored backgrounds of the same long shape. An example of the second type shows Kaṃsa threatening to kill Devakī, mother of Kṛṣṇa, by catching her locks of hair. Each bracket is about 5 feet long and 1 foot wide.

PLATE 60

Brackets of another kind are much smaller and more compact as they present very busy scenes with numerous overlapping characters in squared compositions. These are found around the ceilings inside of the *namaskāra maṇḍapa,* separate and freestanding as a structure before the *srikovil,* directly beneath a brilliantly colored ceiling that is painted in black, yellow, and red geometric patterns. These small struts are, again, non-structural. They are to be admired for the immediacy and evident candor with which their messages are conveyed. Included are episodes from the *Mahābhārata,* and further representations of the life of Kṛṣṇa. A fine small relief of Hanumant shows sensitive selection that has placed the poised monkey figure within minimal vegetal forms to suggest his forest world. And below the small brackets unfolds a running frieze only a few inches high that is wonderfully dynamic in its telling of such exciting tales as that of Kṛṣṇa swallowing the fire that threatened his flocks and friends. In movement, expression, and immediacy, these wood carvings are unsurpassed in Asian sculpture and so they reappear in this study.

PLATE 61

PLATE 62

Providing order and balance to the mix of color and carved form that fills the cornice and ceiling of the Kṛṣṇa structure is a ceiling that is divided into 25 directional squares that contain images of the gods, astrological signs, and lotus blooms, all in brilliant color and high relief. Cosmic significance is major as such designs illustrate, most often, the nine planets or *grahas* (Sūrya, Soma, Bhauma, Budha, Guru, Sukra, Śani, Rāhu, Ketu). Or they represent Brahmā and the eight *dikpālas* as directional guardians on their various *vahāna* carriers, including Indra to the east, Yama at the south, Varuṇa on the west, and Kubera to the north. Agni occupies the southeast, with Nirṛiti to the southwest, Vāyu to the northwest, and Iśāna to the northeast. The *Ṛg Veda* is taken as ancient source for the directional signs, and they relate to the *Vāstupuruṣa Maṇḍala* as seed of all sacred building.

PLATE 63

The porch ceiling, like every part of the temple, is reminder of the timeless interpretation of Indian temple architecture as microcosm of the macrocosm. To quote Clifford Reis Jones: "The conception of power in the directions and their propitiations to make safe and internally pure the center point for the art of sacrifice, worship or revelation, is the meaning behind the nine coffers containing the guardians."[122] Similarly, every narrative and symbolic addition to any temple may be taken along with ritual acts that are performed there as purifying blessing upon the entire monument as "center point" of living. It is abundantly clear that analysis of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa or any other Kerala temple requires much more than visual description.

Chapter Ten

Classical Sources of Temple Design

Kerala architecture as illustrated in the temples mentioned above is classical in the sense that artists follow the established approaches to art and science as detailed, for example, in G. K. Pillai's *Way of the Silpis.*[123] Famous works among the many *śāstras* were accepted and understood in Kerala, but at the same time there was an interior development of practical guides that are equally important. Literature evolves from Manipravalam, a linguistic form and literary style of about the 12th through 14th centuries that mixes Sanskrit and Malayālam in an elaborate and "artificial" style, with Sanskrit forms retaining their full identity, toward more purely Malayālam expression. There had been undifferentiated linguistic entity between Tamil and Malayālam in the south, and there was later a "wonderful growth of Malayālam and its literature" [124] that was not stilled by the incursion of Sanskrit and Aryanization from the north, especially with the Nambūtiri Brāhmaṇs. Local scholars produced major works in the imported mode, with the previously mentioned *Śilparatna* compiled from ancient Śilpa and Agama works by Śrī Kumāra in Kerala, an author well-versed in Śilpa-Vidyā traditions. [125] This text is divided into two parts, with the first consisting of 46 chapters on the construction of houses and villages, along with other subjects, and the second having 35 chapters on iconography and related topics. It is dated by attribution to the 16th century. As Sanskrit lost some of its prominence, so Tamil dwindled as the language of literature, after the separation of Choḷa and Chera powers in the 11th and 12th centuries. [126]

Other works dealing with architecture include the *Manushyālayachandrikā (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,* No. LVI, Trivandrum, 1917) on the construction of houses and allied subjects such as the finding of a proper "resting place" for a deity, which is believed to be of local Kerala authorship. Also important are the *Mayamata, Prayogamañjati,* and the Tāntric *Ratnāvali* that is taken from many sources to describe the temple as palace of the Godhead, "the place wherefrom he dispenses grace to all devotees." The same work also explains that a temple is in fact built under the supervision of the deity that is installed there. [127] Woodcarving arts are supported by texts such as the *Bṛhat Samhita* which gives directions for the season and manner of cutting trees and seasoning wood, among other points. The *Thatchuśāstra* defines temple layout and ritual procedures. More important than any of these, however, is the *Tantrasamuchchaya* of Nārāyana which is datable to the 15th century. [128]

The introductory commentary of the 1919 edition of the *Tantrasamuchchaya* explains that the work treats the rituals of consecration, daily worship, festivals, and other kindred matters of the deities in temples as explained in ancient Tāntric literature and that it is "now accepted as the highest authority in Kerala countries on matters connected with temple worship."[129] The origin of its author Nārāyana is traced to northern Kerala, while a commentary on the work called *Vimarsinī*, was written by Śaṅkara, his son. A second commentary, the *Vivarana,* was written by a disciple of Nārāyaṇa whose name was possibly Kṛṣṇa Sarma. The contents of the famous work, directly related to all of the monuments considered here, are summarized as follows. The first *patala* or section opens with a verse of benediction and a list of contents including directions for the installation of seven gods. Then procedures for choosing a priest as guide for building a temple and for picking a suitable site are given, and ways of purifying and depositing precious substances in the chosen ground are explained. The choosing of a proper stone for the temple image is then detailed.

The second *patala* specifies patterns of construction and style of temple towers and describes the proper appearance of the image and its seat. The spot where the image is to rest is purified, and the raw stone itself must be soaked in water, rose water, milk, and other liquids before it can be carved and the image dedicated.

Purification of a temple site and the planting of a seed which will grow to sprouts that are eaten by cattle before the ground is ploughed are outlined in the third section. Making the idol is a main subject of the directions, and each deity is treated in terms of its own rite of installation. The fourth *paṭala* moves out from the *sanctum sanctorum* to describe *maṇḍapas* or halls that attend it, along with gateway structures and *dhvaja-stambha* flagstaffs. Attendant deities are discussed, such as the seven mothers *(sapta matr)* and guardians of the entrances *(dvārapāla, dvārapālika* figures). Further rites treating temple images are given, with special attention for those that represent the battle god Subrahmaṇya, son of Śiva, who is also known as Skanda or Karttikeya.

Paṭala five returns to the subject of purifying temple images and also treats the physical purity of priests. Notably, further notes describe the conversion of a priest's physical body into a "body of fire" as *akṣaras* (alphabet letters) are deposited at various bodily parts starting with the head. As *mantras* accompany the ritual, the priestly body takes on the character of fire as ultimate purifying agent. In addition, the *patala* advocates the deposit of offerings and oblations in holes dedicated to gods.

The sixth *patala* is quite specific with regard to dates and procedures for the installation of gods. Paste called *aṣṭhabandhạ* is recommended for fixing an image to its pedestal, and ceremonies are outlined for the installation of the seven guardian mothers along with that of the *mahabālipitha* offering stone and *dhvaja.* The concept of the *nirmālyadhāri* or "servant of the deity" who removes the remains after a god has partaken of an offered meal is explained.

Paṭalas seven, eight, and nine deal with daily *pūjā* worship, washing temple halls after *pūjā,* and festival offerings as well as gifts to *bhūta* spirits that serve as guardians. Finally, the tenth section deals with rituals that remove the bad effects of not performing daily *pūjā*, the eleventh governs all types of reconstruction, and the twelfth includes miscellaneous rituals not covered in earlier chapters while also accounting for the author's origins. Taken together, the admonitions and directives encompass all phases of choosing, building, dedicating, and using temples. The deities are Kerala's own, and so too are the structures and images. It is to be expected, then, that the literature of building art is also special to the region. Of the "two" main periods of temple art efflorescence, from the 9th century through the destruction of the Chera capital in the 12th century and its shift south to Quilon, and a second period from the 15th through 19th centuries, classic temple writing belongs to the later age.[130]

N.V. Mallayya, in his *Studies in Sanskrit Texts on Temple Architecture with Special Reference to the Tantrasamuccaya,* explains the use of the specific guidelines for creating art and architecture by stating, "The public of India, especially of ancient and medieval times...did not tolerate individualism of a rampant nature" and that, "In the conception of Indian authorities, freedom lies in restraint, and too much of liberty it was thought would end in license." [131] And so it is appropriate that stanza 50 of *paṭala* two, referring to covering over the rafters of a temple, should be so exact as to state :

> Rafters should be covered all around with planks, prepared of good timber such as the śāka (tectona grandis). The top must be covered by the last Avayava of the śikhara, viz. the Pidhānaphalakā or the final coping slab or plank. When the material employed in the construction is of stone or brick, it is called Mūrdhestaka. These serve to close up the top of the śikhara, like the coping slab or coping-stone of the śikhara. And it is support for the final segment of the structure, the stūpikā.[132]

Further directions in the *Tantrasamuchchaya* and other sources will be analyzed with reference to specific temples, but it is important to remember in closing this brief account of treatises, that in spite of all the elaborate rules and directions, "the distinctive character of Kerala traditional architecture, particularly of its temples, is its simplicity."[133] With background in the time, general form, function, sources, and material of temple architecture, it is appropriate to look more closely at individual monuments. Some of these will be famous while others are very little-known, unpublished, and in danger of destruction.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Return to the North—Plans and Monuments

SOME OF THE most unique Kerala monuments are located in the more northerly districts of Palghat, Malappuram, and Kozhikode along with Cannanore. These areas are the settings for beautiful temples and some of the simplest ones in Kerala. A selection of these monuments is presented here, from north to south, with some relative points taken from classical literature as well as with comments on their religious significance, style, and form. Northern temples have received less attention than they deserve, perhaps because they have been overshadowed by stone temples to the north and east, like those of the Hoysala Dynasty, and by the great stone towers of the south. They are neither as old as the prototype monuments of Mahabalipuram nor as delicate as the expanding star of Somnathpur temple in Karnataka. Yet they are remarkable for their tranquil earthiness, color, approachability, balance between the simply geometric and intricately decorative, and fine use of materials.

FIGURE 7

Temple Plans in Review

It will be clear that Kerala temple architecture is remarkable for the clarity of its overall forms and its skilled woodcarvings, and wall paintings will continue to be seen as unique in many ways. The buildings are linked to other Indian monuments in terms of organization, stonecarving patterns, column design, foundation patterns, and universal iconography. Historical reference is essential as the *adhiṣṭhāna* or plinth is used to determine relative dates, and Hindu or Jain cave temples and freestanding structures of the 8th and 9th centuries, like those at Vilinjam, have been seen to reflect neighboring styles. Column and *taraṅga* roll ornaments follow Pallava and Pāṇḍya patterns just as Choḷa and Nāyaka influences are noted as they affect stone design and temple plan organization, especially in southern Kerala, with Cālukya, Vijayanagar, and even European contributions also being important. Kerala temple design is rightly termed a composite, but it is, of course, unfair to accept either the proposal that, "the temple as an institution was an Aryan gift to South India," or that, "the so-called Kerala school is responsible only for covering the product of the Dravidian tradition"[134] for both statements are oversimplified. Kerala invention will become clear as northern works of art are examined.

FIGURE 8

A classical temple, called *ambalam* or *ksetram* (sometimes *tali)* has a *srikovil* as

FIGURE 9

its heart, the structure referred to earlier as the temple tower or central building. This structure may be round, square, rectangular, oval, or apsidal as a rectangular building with rounded end. It normally faces east, although variation from this is frequent. The *adhiṣṭhāna* is its base and the portion from plinth to spire is the *vimāna* with the *āditala* as ground floor. More specifically, the components from bottom to top are the *upapīṭha* (pedestal), *adhisthāna* (base), *stambha* (pilaster), *prastara* (entablature), *grīvā* (neck of the dome), *śikhara* (cupola), and *stūpi* (pinnacle).[135] The size of the building ranges from the single-floor minimum called *alpa-vimāna* to heights of many impressive but non-functional storeys.

The inner temple is approached by a gateway structure which is usually quite prominent and may even stand quite separate from the cloister walls. Walls are themselves key modules, with the ideal heavenly plan consisting of the *pañcha-prākāra* or five successive enclosures that are reminiscent of the temple-cities of Tamil Nadu, or the multi-walled Hindu temples of Bali. Walls are termed *katte, balivattam, cuttambalam* or *nālambalam,* and *vilakkumādam.* The latter translates from Malayālam to mean "lamp-house," for it is one of the walls that is most likely to be fixed with oil lamps. The most important space for ritual movement within the walls is that of the *śivelippura* that allows for circumambulation around the *srikovil* as *sanctum sanctorum.* It is a *pradaksinā-patha* or path of devotional movement. But the complex may be encircled within any of the walls or even outside of the compound. Indeed, pilgrimage from place to place and temple to temple is itself a kind of *pradakṣinā* rite. The general term for wall is *prākāra* and within these boundaries it has been noted that all kinds of structures will be detailed, including ritual bathing pools and temple theatres called *kūttambalam*. Interconnecting passages and multiplied subsidiary shrines can sometimes make a temple compound seem maze-like, but the most sacred spot and the "center" of any complex is always the *srikovil.*

PLATE 64

A. **Kozhikode District**

The Tali Temple in Calicut (Kozhikode District) and its Restricted Arts

The large coastal city of Calicut (Kozhikode) is a key to the history of northcentral Kerala and of the entire state. Calicut is not the home of earliest temple art, since it had little importance before the 13th century, but it sheltered many important developments, especially before its 15th century conflicts with Cochin. And in the 18th century Calicut fell before Mysore invaders. The Tali temple, dating in its present form to the 12th and 13th centuries according to K.V. Soundara Rajan,[136] is one of several important Tali temples dedicated to Śiva. It also contains images and symbols of Viṣṇu, Bhagavatī, Gaṇapati, and Śāstā (Ayyappaṉ). A large tank called Kandamkulam, measuring 349 feet by 140 feet, is beside it, and the Tali temple remains medieval not only in appearance and meaning but in its patterns of administration. This makes it especially problematical for non-Hindus to carry on study, whatever their concerns. When human obstacles are overcome, however, the temple proves to be a monument of

PLATE 65

impressive sanctity and considerable beauty, rising above its very common setting. It stands near the former palace of the Zamorin of Calicut, to which it had easy access even after a massive laterite wall was built after Albuquerque's raid on Calicut in 1510.[137] Its annual festival takes place in the month of Medam (April/May).

The temple, 218 feet long from east to west and 270 feet wide from north to south, is entered through a large gatehouse of modern origin with the usual spacious interior platforms on either side for use by Brāhmans. It also has an exterior verandah. The porch building has fine woodcarvings on its lintel and cornice, and its high front gable is supported by four wooden columns. It opens directly into a courtyard of average size, with a small granite shrine of Kṛṣṇa standing to the left or northeast with an interior stone image, and a guardian figure occupying a pedestal to the right. The Kṛṣṇa shrine has become well-known as a local immanence of the great Guruvayur Kṛṣṇa.[138] Directly ahead stands a tall metal flagstaff (*dhvaja stambha*) and then the entrance to the cloistered walls of the inner courtyard. These walls are partly of open latticework with oil lamp holders, providing a glimpse of the inner buildings. The gable over this doorway is especially flamboyant in its carving, with floral patterns that are active, even agitated, in their curling movement. Built into the cloister within are platform spaces for Brāhmans once again, and the practical places for kitchen and storage uses.

FIGURE 10

The goal of every devotee is to reach the inner courtyard that holds the *srikovil* itself. It is fairly small and quite crowded with auxiliary structures. All of the roofs are tiled, and fine bracket figures support the two roofs of the double-storeyed *vimāna* of the *srikovil*. This building is axially oriented toward the east, with an attached *mukha maṇḍapa* as entry porch and a detached *namaskāra mandapa* as pavilion of prayer and offering before it. The latter structure is open and supported by 16 columns with its own pyramidal roof, while the attached porch has solid walls, four interior columns, and a roof covering that extends out from that of the *srikovil*. The *mukha mandapa,* which H. Sarkar suggests is a later addition to the temple, is made of granite, and it contains a granite carving of Nandi as the bull-vehicle of Siva. The *namaskāra maṇḍapa* is small with slatted walls that slant outward. It is noted mainly for its wooden ceiling which is very deep and very intricate with many telescoping borders and 12-inch brackets that show elephant-supported deities, often in pairs.

PLATE 66

Rather than for structure, the Tali site is important for the painted and three-dimensional treatment of its walls and roofs which makes the *srikovil* form both high relief and sculpture in the round. It is somewhat "baroque" in the richness of its surface carving and in the bursts of mural painting on its walls, being more abundant in its meaningful ornament than are most other northern or central temples in Kerala. Stucco is lavished upon the laterite walls of the *srikovil* in three dimensions as figures and floral additions; the underlying stone is itself

PLATE 67

carved into false doors, blind windows, and architectural framework, and smooth panels between them are plastered and painted in bright hues. The paintings may have been added to the structure later, perhaps during the years of Bhakti fervor,[139] and they seem to have taken the last unadorned spaces. Foliage patterns are treated in all the media, and they may be viewed together with the paintings in their plastered panels for an overall effect like that of brocade. Yet abundant detail does not obscure the subjects of story, as can be seen as Ganeśa dances freely within his wish-fulfilling halo of foliage or as Kṛṣṇa languidly plays his flute beneath the swelling branches of a tree. Such scenes are part of the evidence that is taken to declare this small temple as equal in every way to the temple of Guruvayur near Trichur, one of the great centers of the Hindu world. In terms of painting and sculpture, at least, this is true.

PLATE 68

A single frontal deity sits cross-legged at the center of the upper storey on each side of the *srikovil,* and wooden roof brackets of the *srikovil* are large and finely rendered in terms of moving volumes and identifying polychrome, with *vyāla* figures under the heavy roof corners being especially dramatic. The violent rearing monsters, as protective as they are horrible, could be cited for their remarkable similarity to *kumsala* carvings in Nepal, but it must be remembered that the guardian dragon/lion/monster is an almost pan-Indian motif. Architectural patterns, so numerous all around the exterior, are not at all like those of Nepal. False niches are tall and narrow, with *śālā-śikhara* barrel-vaulted tops, and the many *ghana-dvāras* as false doors are covered by *makara-toraṇas* that combine floral garlands with the heads of water monsters. An effect of luscious fertility is achieved, and it is reinforced by the luxuriant frames of all other structural and decorative parts. *Kuḍya-stambha* pilaster projections on the wall surfaces carry bracket forms with lotus buds, and such cornice elements as the *kapota* and *bhūta-valabhī*, or dwarf-form moulding, are also organic in form. *Nāsikā* false windows enclose lively human faces, and rows of lions are everywhere. Painted scenes mostly treat Vaiṣṇava subjects.[140]

PLATE 69
FIGURES 11, 12

H. Sarkar attributes the appearance of large standing figures carved from stone blocks and set into the exterior walls of the *mukha-maṇḍapa* to the 16th century on the basis of their resemblance to the Vijayanagar idiom. The images represent Hanumant, Rāma, Śiva Naṭarāja, Viṣṇu, Sarasvatī and others who are frequently seen in Kerala sculpture, but their occurrence as a formal array in "gallery" placement is unusual in Kerala. In contrast to the exterior elaboration of the *srikovil,* its interior is typically plain except for a simple *Śiva-liṅga* as its central symbol. The stone carving stands at the center of intersecting diagonals that were undoubtedly drawn by the master architect from corner to corner of the square plot that is the plan of the building. The *srikovil* is double-walled, as a temple of *sandhara* type that allows for circumambulation by priests in a clockwise direction in the space between the inner and outer walls. According to K. V. Soundara Rajan, the inner enclosure is in fact earlier and of more typically Kerala style than the total structure as it is now seen.[141]

PLATE 70

Like nearly all Kerala temples, the Tali monument reaches out to contact its devotees, who cannot enter the *sanctum sanctorum,* partly by means of a *praṇāla.* The significance of this projecting drain is great as it leads from the inner object of devotion and offering by way of a channel in the floor out through the walls of the *srikovil* to the exterior, where it expels the blessed ablutions that have been poured over the image within. This *praṇāla* is circular, carved as repeated rings, and supported by a seated *gana* demi-god with a cup that collects the liquid, which again comes forth from his lower body in what K.V. Soundara Rajan calls, "the most sophisticated *praṇāla* known in Kerala.[142] The flowing gifts may be considered to be a kind of lifeline from the gods' higher realm to the world of men. A shallow depression in the paved floor of the courtyard normally carries the liquid away from the inner building, and that is present here. In the case of Śiva temples, this channel interrupts the normal movement of circumambulation, for the sacred liquid is said to be too "hot," too dangerous in its divinity to be crossed over, so that devotees must retrace their movements in a reverse or counter-clockwise direction. It is a case of divine current that is so powerful that it can electrocute as well as electrify.

FIGURE 13

A single carving, such as that of a *vyāla* leogryph temporarily removed from its wall, is enough to represent the vibrant art of the Tali temple; its art historical importance has little to do with its age. Still, it should be mentioned that there is no reference to Calicut or to this temple in the 13th century writings of Marco Polo, and that the first record of Calicut itself is found in the writing of the traveller from Africa, Ibn Baṭuta (1342–47). In view of this, H. Sarkar estimates that the temple dates from not earlier than the early 15th century.[143]

FIGURES 15, 16

Usually overlooked in any mention of the art at the Tali temple, yet evocative enough to conclude this short analysis, is the charming impression of innocence that emerges from its sculptures and paintings. Gentle smiles are everywhere, and half-lidded eyes gaze coyly at the viewer. A sweet mood of play prevails, as even the gods seem to be dazzled by their setting of finery. Pastel color dominates, at least today, and painted line is lacy and somehow insubstantial, although clear and precise. The building seems to have been embroidered. Finally, there are no more childlike erotic sculptures in all of India than those chubby bodies that frolic beneath the eaves in Calicut. Along with these forms, the Tali temple represents the total integration that can exist among wood, laterite, granite, plaster, and stucco in Kerala story-telling art.

PLATE 71

Karātt Kṛṣṇa and Ponmeri Śiva (Kozhikode District) as "Minor" Works of Art

Kozhikode District has many intriguing monuments large and small, famous and unknown, that are the matrix from which the Tali temple rises. Most are associated in some way with Zamorin history. Two structures that are decaying, and omitted from all temple studies so far published, are included here. Minor but important, as village shrines of the type around which most Kerala lives revolve, are the Kṛṣṇa temple of Karātt and the Ponmeri Śiva temple nearby.

An introduction to Kerala temple design of the northern districts might be

provided by the little-known Karātt temple of Lord Kṛṣṇa, locally called Karāttapan. It is found in the small village of Puramery in Vadakara Taluk of Calicut District. And it is a simple structure of post and lintel construction methods that utilize local materials, but the organization of pent-roof gateway, passage, cloister, porch, and shrine buildings is complex.

Visitors approach the Karātt temple and its outer gate by means of ten stone steps that lead up to the top of a paved foundation made of red laterite, and the level of the shrine within. The stone gateway is sheltered by a red tiled roof of considerable overhang. It is the *mukha maṇḍapa* or entrance porch. An arched doorway opening reveals a metal flagstaff that stands within, towering over the temple environs. This object is the strongest vertical statement in the design of the Karātt temple, for the sacred place is typically low in its harmonious blending with nature. As noted of Kerala temples in the *Memoir of Travancore Survey:* [144]

PLATE 72

> Their style of architecture is sufficiently complicated, but never remarkable for design, elegance, or magnificence of dimensions; it consists of a series of low buildings encompassed by a strong wall...they are surrounded with groves and tanks for the refreshment and devotion of Brahmins; Their site is always well chosen on the bank of a stream, or verge of a lake, embosomed in the exuberant foliage of majestic trees; nothing can be more beautifully picturesque than their situation.

Temples are rarely higher than the coconut palms around them, and their enclosing walls take in grassy boundaries as well as pavement. The red color of porous laterite walls and of fine tile roofs blends with the color of the earth. Local schistose stone and granite are used to build the grey foundations and for paving. But some elements do stand apart: copper sheeting that is utilized like flat shingles to cover the roofs of the *srikovil* enclosure for the *sanctum sanctorum*, the gold or copper flagstaff, brilliant wall frescoes, and a program of woodcarving that includes roof struts, gables, lintels, cornices, screens, and ceilings. Indeed, Kerala must be credited with one of the fullest developments of wooden art in Asia. As noted, the state has a rare rival in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal.

At the temple of Karātt, one passes through the outer gate to enter a grassy court that surrounds a cloistered shrine complex. Ahead stands the metal tower marker, then a projecting passage with pent roof covering and a gable that is filled with four finely rendered wooden columns. At the end of this passage is the entrance to an inner court, flanked by ranks of wall-mounted oil lamps, the *dipa madam.* The cloister wall itself, a *prākāra,* is plastered and painted white; it is an effective foil for colors to be found within.

PLATE 73

The cloister passage of entry is deep, with platforms on either side for the relaxation and discourse of Brāhmaṇs. Just beyond it rests an elevated porch with its own tile roof, the *namaskāra mandapa.* This small and separate structure is a place for prayer by devotees and priests, for symbolic collection of offerings (such as coconuts and rice that are given at harvest time), and for the burning of sacred lamps. The porch rests on the normal east-west axis of temple design, and it is a

final preliminary structure before the sanctified *srikovil.* It is part of a procession of buildings.

At the temple of Kṛṣṇa, the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* has crumbled to some degree, but the umbrella roof beams still rest on a meticulously carved and painted frieze of wood. It presents the story of the great Churning of the Sea of Milk that involves Viṣṇu in the creation and preservation of the universe. It is very animated, filled with organic volumes and sharp details. Yet the scene measures only four inches in height by three feet in length. In a separate panel, Viṣṇu's feminine counterpart, Lakṣmī, is shown in her familiar pose of honored bathing by two elephants. Colors are brilliant and action is dramatic throughout, so that the ceiling carvings make one anticipate the art of the main shrine.

PLATE 74

Both the *namaskara maṇḍapa* and the *srikovil* of Karātt are roofed with copper, and the latter structure is crowned by a pointed *stūpi* pinnacle shining atop a *kalaśa* or concentrated pot-form. The vertical element is the usual top-piece of temples in Kerala; the plan of the *srikovil* below is typically square and it has double walls within. The building is raised higher than the separate porch. Its granite entry steps, the *sopāna,* carry images of ferocious leogryphs on balūstrade railings. Only priests may climb these stairs, but as usual it is possible for worshippers to look inside from the courtyard pavement to offer their devotions toward a stone image of Kṛṣṇa. As always, the image is important not in itself but as a symbol of greater divinity.

The courtyard of the *srikovil* is not large, measuring 32 feet wide by 40 feet 10 inches on the main axis. The *srikovil* itself measures 11 feet 6 inches by 12 feet 10 inches, and its white plastered walls are completely covered on the outside by large paintings that clearly and dramatically convey Hindu iconography and narrative. Particularly noteworthy is a whirling circular rendering, about 5 feet high, of Siva as Lord of the Dance.

PLATE 75

The almost theatrical impact of Karātt is surpassed by that of a better preserved temple nearby: the Ponmeri Siva temple in the village of Villiappally. Before it stand, from the viewer's left to right, small shrines that honor Brahmā, Śaṅkara Nārāyana, and Āditya as celestial deity. The main tower has two roofs over the *srikovil* with a projecting double gable at the front. Figural struts of wood, 3 to 4 feet long, support both roof projections, while larger supporting images in the round stand beside the *srikovil* door. *Dvārapāla* guardians, 6 feet tall and carved of granite, are closest to the entrance. The walls project and recede in shadowed, architectonic multiplication, in contrast to the active organic volumes of the figures.

PLATE 76 FIGURE 14 PLATES 79, 78, 77

The grounds of the Siva temple are large and open while containing several subsidiary shrines, and the squared pent-roof tower is imposing. But the wonder of the complex is found in the *namaskāra mandapa*. It is small in scale and simply an attendant pavilion, as always, but this structure is nonetheless a major monument of Kerala art. Every square inch of its ceiling and roof underside is

PLATE 80 PLATE 81

painted with dazzling colors in textile-like patterns of rosettes and geometric stars. Large lathe-turned pendants of lacquered polychrome hang all along the roof edges. Miniature struts lean up to support the superstructure in the form of divine figures from the Hindu pantheon. A frieze just under the sloping roof beams again represents the great churning around Mount Meru in remarkable precision. And the ceiling is a burst of dramatic storytelling in three dimensions. Its 9 squares, carved in deep relief, are bordered by projecting lotus blooms. Within these, eight figures radiate from the center square, four being angled at the corners of the ceiling. The middle of the elaborate grid is occupied by Sūrya the Sun god atop a carriage of ten horses. His painted image is complete, clear, and beautiful. It is also less than 12 inches high.

PLATE 82

PLATE 83

Lokanar Kavu Bhagavatī (Kozhikode District) and Horizontality

The orientation of all the temples discussed above is essentially horizontal. Structures have been seen to rarely rise above the trees that surround them, and with their broad open spaces and multiple walled enclosures they invite processional movement of both axial and circumambulatory directions. This is clear at the temple of Lokanar Kavu Bhagavatī at Vadakara in Kozhikode District. Brightly painted yellow and green during recent renovation, it has a low outer wall of laterite with white stripes and an inner cloister wall within which a white-plastered *srikovil* may be glimpsed. It is very open and very low, with another equally spacious compound having small shrines located in a nearby complex that is slightly downhill to the right. Like any village, it blends with the earth setting from which its materials are drawn. The goddess of the temple is the family deity of a Nair clan called Ravarimar that emigrated from Quilon 900 years ago, with traditional patronage from the Rāja of Kadathanad. The temple is sister to the three major Bhagavatī monuments of Mukambika, Lokambika, and Hemambika.[145]

Tiruvannur Śiva Temple (Kozhikode District) and its Fame

The group of Kozhikode temples briefly treated here reveals the variety that exists within a single district of Kerala, along with the historical progression that underlies all the monuments. The temple of Tiruvannur Śiva at Panniyankar Amsam near Calicut city is a very important monument with historical and sociological significance that surpasses that of the preceding three temples of this survey. It is a very large temple in terms of ground area, it is elegant in terms of its two copper-covered roofs and that of the separate *namaskāra maṇḍapa* before it, it is unusual in having an apsidal plan and facing west, but most important, it is significant because of its function as a major Śiva temple that is associated with the history of Zamorin rule in Kerala. The monument is ascribed to the 9th century on the basis of its similarity to other apsidal temples, including Kālasaṃhāramūrti temple at Triprangod Amsam, Tirur Taluk, in Malappuram District, which also faces west and is dated by inscription to before the time of the Chera monarch Kodai-Ravivarman (917–944).[146] Nearby the temple is a house

PLATE 84

that is still occupied by descendants of the Zamorin lineage and it contains an auxiliary throne carved with lions and angels in European mode that was used by the ruler. A second nearby house that is beside the temple encloses a light well that is three storeys high, for it is an especially large dwelling suited to house many guests, along with the matrilineal extended family that is traditional to Kerala. Today it is almost empty, with the family dispersed.

PLATE 85

As at the Tali temple in Calicut, a Kṛṣṇa shrine is an important addition to the Śiva complex. It is located on the north side and roofed with copper. A small shrine to Paraśurāma was recently added to the left of the entry gate, and a large sacred Banyan tree has long grown to the right side. A short walk away stands a tiny shrine of Kāli that is very simple indeed, with wooden lattice walls, copper-covered roof, and four-tier oil lamp in its paved courtyard Kālī temples are generally called *kavu,* literally cluster of trees or serpent grove, and even today there are Kālī temples located under Banyan trees, without any roofs.[147]

Inside a high laterite wall with arched gateways, the cloister walls are very open with their lattice screens under tile roofs providing a reasonably clear view of the structure within. The *srikovil* is whitewashed and partly painted with murals. Dark wooden brackets support its two roofs and there are four major directional figures beneath the upper overhang, including Brahmā and Narasimha. Local information is that 12 of the 16 brackets on the upper level represent the penance of Arjuna. Above them are three golden *stūpi* forms as roof pinnacles, while the interior focus is on a *liṅga* of Śiva. The walls have architectural ornamentation, but they are far less complicated than those of the Calicut Tali temple. They enclose a plan that has a length one and one-half times its width, a proportion that is traced into Kerala from Tuḷunāḍu,[148] once a distinct political and linguistic unit that is now absorbed into northern Kerala and southern Kanara, and home of Embrāntiri Brāhmans who commonly assisted Nambūtiris at major temples. Most important, probably, are 21 carved panels that are described by R.V. Poduval as conveying the Kirāta story in one set and the Daśavatāra (Ten Incarnations) of Viṣṇu in another.[149] Some evidence of rebuilding is suggested, with the earlier *adhiṣṭhāna* base having been built upon so that it is now a sub-base or *upapīṭha.*[150] It is to be considered together with the temples at Tripangod and Trikkandiyur, both in Malappuram District, as important temples founded in the Early Period (800–1000 A.D.).

The monument continues to be a significiant goal of pilgrims. Temple design is consistent throughout most of Kerala, and the general statements that have been made regarding materials, organization, and design, apply everywhere. But epigraphical evidence, comparison with the art of outside powers, and study of stylistic change all reveal art historical evolution. Codified only recently, and most notably by H. Sarkar of the Archaeological Survey of India, this development encompasses all temples treated here.

Valayanadu Kavu Bhagavatī (Kozhikode District) and Her Drama

Kozhikode District is also noted for the temple of Valayanadu Kavu Bhagavatī, a major work of restricted access that represents the mighty presence of the great goddess in Kerala. Two large *gopura* gateways cover the entries of the temple. That at the top of a steep eastern stairway shelters a *pattu maṇḍapa* as place for performances of instrumental music and song, and the northern *gopura* at ground level is adorned with large female guardians made of wood. The plan of the shrine is unusual, with the rectangular *srikovil* being placed without raised base, with no *mukha maṇḍapa,* and facing north. Its most remarkable feature is an interior grouping of 15 life-size images of Bhagavatī in her many forms, each separately carved of jackwood. This is one of the most important statements of freestanding wooden sculpture in Kerala, awesome and magical. Along with the images, a ceremonial object of great veneration is the sword of Bhagavatī that is kept inside the temple to be displayed at festival time on a special small *maṇḍapa* at the back side of the *srikovil.* The grouping of interior sculptures is dark and sooty at present; each goddess is shown cross-legged and raising her right hand in benediction. Two females guard the door with raised swords, tautly volumetric and brilliant red in color, with long white fangs. The first impression of the temple is of such dynamic figures along with the unusual rectangular plan of the *srikovil,* but there is much more of note.

A total of four *gopura* structures are carved with especially florid borders, generally termed *mottu* or "bud," along the edges of the gables in the running diagonals that are analyzed above by J.H. Cousins, while they are supported within by small columns. Each gable ends in its lower part with stylized "arms"[151] and a fine horizontal beam of entwined *nāgas* moves across its center. The porches themselves have large lathe-turned columns of wood that are brilliantly lacquered in red, yellow, and green. The eastern *gopura* is a double roof structure, and with its long flight of steps it is quite massive. It does not have the upturned corner curves, also referred to as *nāgas,* that lighten the visual weight of the *srikovil* roof. Four *makara* heads are oddly rough on the western *gopura* gable, appearing to be crocodiles in their cartoon-like clarity. Also atypical are loose pendants of wood that hang from this gable in the form of cashew fruits with their suspended nuts. These replace the more usual lotus bud elements that have been mentioned previously.

The northern *gopura* is most important, for it is on the axis of entry to the Bhagavatī monument and it presents sword-wielding females both on the exterior and inward-facing walls. Ten *vyālas* of elephantine type rear up on the outer façade. The ceiling of the center section of its three-part entrance is carved with the nine planets, painted red, while the left and right sections bear lotus blooms in two groups of nine. From its doorway the unique arrangement of the *srikovil* may be observed. It appears understated on the outside but it is extraordinary on the inside.

The rectangular plan of the shrine room is repeated in the proportions of a

large pent-roofed area before it. This covering on columns shelters a fairly plain *namaskāra maṇḍapa* to the right side of the *srikovil* and a small shrine of Śiva, fronted by Nandi, to the left. A male figure with tall headdress and holding a trident, presumably representing Śiva, is beside the *srikovil* entrance in seated pose. The image is about 4 feet high and is carved of granite. It is, according to M.G.S. Narayan, ascribable to the 18th century because of such details as the form of its eyes. An oil lamp and a lotus made of stone are placed directly before the door. Attendant elements are many, but none diverts the eye from the almost magnetic darkness of the large shrine door with its two columns. The *pranāla* drain, surprisingly, projects directly forward from the front of the enclosure nearby. Inside, an army of omnipotent females faces the devotee, easily observed in their shadowed assembly. They communicate strength through impressive, even aggressive volume, in the way that Tāntric images of the north often speak through grotesque features and multiple limbs. The lasting impression of the little-known images, and temple of Valayanadu Kavu Bhagavatī, is one of dignity and strength. It does not fit any standard Kerala model and it deserves thorough research.

Panniyankara Bhagavatī (Kozhikode District)

This temple in Calicut is a second remarkable Bhagavati monument. It yields an inscription of the 11th century and King Ravi Kota, and its origin may be as early as the 9th century. It is a very small temple with small *śikhara* that is entered by an unusual arched porch as *mukha maṇḍapa*. The *srikovil* has two circumambulatory spaces within as *sandhara* units, with the second being extremely narrow. The innermost wall, within which the *garbha gṛha* is located, is confirmed by local priests to be octagonal. Much of the building has collapsed.

This is another monument that has been little studied, but it is especially intriguing. Although it has been plastered and whitewashed, it has not been reconstructed. From the ruins of the three walls, especially the visible innermost wall, it appears that the structure once had three roofs. The lower two would have rested on square storeys, while the third storey and its covering would have been octagonal. Comparable monuments, such as the Madattilappan Temple at Peruvanam in Trichur District, are very few in Kerala despite the fact that octagonal plans are prescribed in classical literature.

Varakkal Bhagavatī (Kozhikode District) at the Seaside

This third temple of Bhagavatī, with secondary dedication to Sāsta and Daksinamūrti, is located at the edge of Calicut and is said to have been founded by Paraśurāma, who placed the central image himself.[152] It serves as reminder of the function of the goddess as protector of Kerala's shores. Particularly, she is Durgā. The surroundings are frequently flooded in bad weather, but the temple itself is raised on a rocky hillock that commands a sweeping vista of the sea. No inscriptions are noted, but stone carvings at the upper level of the granite plinth present geometrical and rosette patterns that suggest 17th century style, in the

view of M.G.S. Narayan. Zamorin records mention the place by name, and it is still the site of an important annual festival that involves bathing in the sea during the full moon of the month of Tulam, as well as certain special observances at the time of eclipse. Valu Bali rites are performed here in honour of ancestors, and legend has it that a husband who ignores the ceremonies at this temple is liable to be divorced by his wife. Large depressions on either side of the road from the seashore to the temple are long unused bathing tanks, now choked with water hyacinths, but the monument itself is a living one.

The temple measures 96 feet long from east to west and 66 feet wide from north to south, and its interior image, usually draped in red cloth and flower garlands, is suitably brilliant. It is made of dark stone but wears abundant jewelry, and its closeness to the visitor underlines once more how accessible the most sacred images are to ordinary devotees. Varakkal Bhagavatī stands tall as a physical and spiritual landmark of Kerala geography. At the time of the new moon day in 1895, U. Balakrishnan Nair wrote: "Numberless men, women, and children of every caste thronged the usually deserted temple; and from one end to another there was a long array of surging human beings, bathing and playing in the sea and tanks. It is supposed that on this day the sea, submissive to the deity, becomes calm, and that an underground *tirtha* near the temple spouts forth holy water."[153] And so the goddess continues to subdue the world.

Bilathikulam Śiva temple (Kozhikode District)

Located beside a very large tank in the environs of Calicut city, this small temple is only about 150 years old. It honors Śiva, Vettekkaran, and Sāstā. The central image of the small and plain *srikovil* is a stone *linga* that is mounted with silver eyes and nose, and hung with a series of silver crescents. No elaborate gateways or porches precede the shrine room. The temple is not unusual or outstanding in any way, but it is included here because, like untold numbers of monuments not included in this report, it has spiritual validity. This is the higher reference that is more important than visuals. As a trustee of the temple advised the author, "In the temple our eyes are closed."

B. Malappuram District Temples

Karikkad Ksetram (Malappuram District), A Laboratory of Temple Design

FIGURE 17 PLATE 86

If only one temple complex could be taken to represent Kerala design, Karikkad Ksetram in Manjeri Taluk would be a good choice. It is of fairly early origin, the 11th century, and its large paved courtyard holds a fine apsidal temple with rectangular interior that is dedicated to Sāstā, a circular building of Subrahmanya, and a two-storey square temple as well. Paintings adorn the walls, and there are considerable numbers of exterior sculptures as well. An exceptionally large resthouse borders the courtyard and a deep bathing tank is nearby.

The apsidal building is another that H. Sarkar traces to Tulunādu models on the basis of its proportions. It has no inner ambulatory, so it is a temple of

nirandhāra type, and the interior, which suggests a single unit from outside, is divided into *garbha gṛha* and smaller *maṇḍapa* of equal width, but with the inner room slightly deeper. The structure measures about 21 feet long by 16 feet wide, with the *garbha gṛha* about 9 feet wide and 8 feet deep. The building faces west. On the basis of style, H. Sarkar suggests that the temple was constructed in the early 10th century. An inscription is dated to the 11th century on palaeographical grounds. Two simple *praṇālas* project from its side wall to carry away ablutions, and the walls are brightened by panels that display brilliantly colored *dvārapāla* protectors. It is a key early monument.[154]

Circular in plan, the Subrahmaṇya temple faces east, with a separate *namaskāra maṇḍapa* but no other *maṇḍapa* before it. It seems to radiate energy in its very pure geometric statement, and it impresses the viewer as being lofty even though its physical size is not large. Tall flagstaffs, one bearing a bronze peacock and the other a bronze horse, are major vertical accents that precede the earth-hugging shrine proper. It is a *dvitala-vimāna* or two-storeyed temple, typically built of laterite on a base of granite and covered by a wooden superstructure with copper roofs. Because the building seems quite simple from a distance, it is useful to examine the *adhiṣṭhāna* for the many complex and distinct elements that compose it. The base compares closely to that of an 11th century temple at Trichur, Vaḍakkunātha, which has the same parts. These are an *upāna* as plain lowermost moulding, a *jagatī* or vertical moulding of minimal height, a *kumuda* as exclusively sacred moulding that is octagonal in this example, *kaṇṭha* as recessed border with *gala-pāda* rail pattern, *valabhi* convex moulding, *kapota* overhanging cornice, and *prati* as crowning moulding followed by *vedikā* as "railing" that intervenes between the *adhiṣṭhāna* base and the *bhitti* or wall proper. Three-dimensional forms, like elephants and lions that project from stone walls at the entrance to the cloister, are not normally found on temple *adhiṣṭhāna* carvings for these are almost always restrained and classic.

Numerous small details of the large complex could be mentioned to lighten the academic nature of this "laboratory" of temple plans—the delicate metal pinnacles of a subsidiary Śāstā shrine, the fine *vyālas* of a *sopāna* balustrade, and the architectonic patterns that fill the sheltered triangle of a severe gable. But one detail stands out among all; a small stone image of Subrahmanya in his *srikovil* shelter. The little sculpture may be seen easily from the door of its temple, resting on a platform in its elevated inner room. Oil lamps stand before it and are suspended over it in the austere darkness, and its body is hung and crowned with precious ornaments.

Kadampuzha Temple at Valancheri (Malappuram District) in the Forest

Kadampuzha Temple at Valancheri in Tirur Taluk is of no historical significance and its architecture is modern and pedestrian. The temple image is completely hidden from view by a curtain of red cloth. There is little to photograph and little to discuss here, except that the temple represents an evolving

pilgrimage site of growing sanctity. The secretive shrine almost buried in a deep forest draws crowds of ever-growing numbers, a reminder that the history of Kerala temple art is still a developing subject. And that divine presence may be newly manifest.

Navamukunda at Tirunavaye (Malappuram District) of the Āḷvārs

Navamukunda Temple at Tirunavaye is a Viṣṇu monument of long standing, in contrast to the above, with its praises sung in Aḷvār songs of the 9th century. Its prosperity ended in 1746 when invasions from Mysore under Haidar Ali and Tīpu Sultan brought down the power of Zamorin patrons. Yet it still represents the style of H. Sarkar's Middle Phase of temple art, especially in its tall and graceful *dvārapāla* figures.[155]

Triprangode Śiva (Malappuram District), Paintings and Processions

Tirur Taluk is home to the temple of Triprangode Śiva, also known as Kālasaṁharamūrti temple, with its main shrine facing west and containing a Śiva *liṅga.* The *upapītha* and base appears to be of the Early Period and the 9th century, perhaps even its first quarter according to H. Sarkar, for an inscription of the Chera monarch Kodai-Ravivarman (917–944) refers to a gift of land to the already existing temple *(Annual Report for Epigraphy for 1895*, No. 219). The main building has two storeys of laterite construction on a granite base and it is apsidal with attached *ardha maṇḍapa* and freestanding *namaskāra maṇḍapa.* Once again the *upapītha* may be the remnant of an early structure that is nowlost. The *garbha gṛha* holds a *linga* on *yoni* pedestal that drains directly into a channel that is brought outside by a *praṇāla.* Of nine subsidiary shrines at the temple, four are found in a straight progression to the right of the cloister entry. The most distant of these is the largest, called Karanathil Śiva, and it is covered by two tile roofs. Fairly well-preserved paintings on plaster grace all four of its exterior walls and the somewhat faded paint still presents a warm palette of reds, browns, and golds as it describes graceful figures in subdued action. The sub-shrine is not dated, but the paintings recall the understated elegance of works at Mattancheri and Padmanābhapuram palaces, but not the bold exuberance of the later palace of Kṛṣṇapuram.

Subsidiary shrines occupy the very spacious and grassy grounds of the walled compound, with paved walkways all around outside the cloister walls for the daily circumambulations of the deity's portable image. The massive outer walls of laterite are partially collapsed and the surrounding lands are not as densely populated as other parts of Kerala, but the temple of Triprangode is another that remains very active as sacred organism.

Trikandiyur Śiva Temple (Malappuram District)

A 10th century nucleus exists at the temple of Trikandiyur Śiva in Tirur Taluk, and it has an old *adhiṣṭhāna* that is now used as an *upapīṭha,* [156] but its importance continued into the late period, as recorded by a 16th century stone

FIGURE 18

inscription. The temple is ascribed to Paraśurāma himself and it was maintained by the Zamorin of Calicut after the extinction of the Vettat family as original caretakers. Its locale is celebrated as the birthplace of Tunjattu Ramunajan, the "Father of Malayālam Literature." [157] H. Sarkar mentions the presence of a sculpture of a female dwarf that supports the drain for lustral water, as well as a stone carved to represent a *nāga* as *praṇāla* support, [158] but it was not possible for the author to pass beyond the high outer walls, and no further remarks will be made here.

Sukapuram Dakṣiṇamūrti at Edappal (Malappuram District) with its Images

The Sukapuram Temple of Dakṣiṇamūrti at Edappal in Ponnani Taluk is one of the most beautiful temples in northern Kerala, and the monument that will conclude this overview of Malappuram District. The temple has a very unusual plan, with major shrine openings to both south and east in honor of Śiva. The eastern side is approached by a wide and steep stairway that leads up from a bathing tank and walled compound below. All sides are surrounded by extensive fields of bananas and other crops designated for support of the temple. And the temple is located in a part of Kerala where ancient traditions remain strong, as indicated by a recent performance at Panyal of ancient Vedic fire sacrifice, an event that was recorded by American film makers. ("Altar of Fire," Berkeley, California, 1975).

The southern entry extends as *mukha maṇḍapa* with *śuka nāsa* or "parrot beak" roof extension that recalls Cālukya patterns. The Śiva image inside is framed by a halo of lights, as seen through the eastern door also. The square *garbha gṛha* proper stands as a *vimāna* or miniature temple of South Indian type with ambulatory around it. The form of the temple as a whole is suggestive of the 13th century and the Middle Phase of Kerala style, with walls divided into five bays on each side. It has two roofs that are covered with shingles of copper.

A special borrowing is a *puṣpa-potikā* that appears in Choḻa art in the 12th century [159] and in Pāṇḍya structures at about the same time. This corbel bracket form is complemented by *pranāla* drains that terminate in lotus or lotus-bud elements as another Choḻa borrowing. In Kerala these first appear in the 13th century. Along with absorbing new elements, the lower portion of Kerala *srikovil* walls become increasingly decorative in this time.

The five bays are separated by *hārāntara* recesses and projections of numerous architectonic types cover the walls. More unusual than architectural wall decorations are large wooden bracket figures that support both roofs. These are well preserved, with their colors faded only to pastels. And they deserve attention as being among the major wood bracket carvings of Kerala. The characters are easily recognized, Hanumant and Rāma among them. They are spaced widely enough to retain individuality, yet they are unified by style and a kind of awareness of each other that is conveyed by gestures and expressions. Formal seated figures facing the cardinal directions below the upper roof are quite lifeless by comparison.

A visitor to the Dakṣiṇamūrti temple approaches it from a bathing area by a laterite stairway to the east, with the pattern of the complex above expressed in the pyramidal silhouette of the tile roofed cloister, followed by the similar angles of a central gable of the interior, and again repeated by the double pyramid of the *srikovil*. Gables are also found at the corners of the cloister, quite plain but with some floral framework, wooden bird forms, and pendant lotus buds. The roof line of the *mukha maṇḍapa* introduces a strong horizontal thrust to the largely pyramidal scheme, while many shadowed niches and adorsed columns lighten the walls with bold vertical accents. Whitewash, although rather hastily applied in the latest coating, strengthens the contrast of light and shadow. Those stone parts that are unpainted, like narrative reliefs within some of the niches, appear to be absorbed in darkness.

A large gable over the *mukha maṇḍapa* is very deep and carved at the back with a porous, overall.texture of miniature columns, niches, and divine faces. Again, it is ornamented with three-dimensional birds and hanging lotus buds, that in this case with chain-link wooden parts for suspension. Columns at the front of the gable are lathe-turned or rectilinear, with vegetal additions. The gable is bold and easily read from the ground level, two storeys below. The roof below it is "lifted" by *nāga* additions at its corners. But the eye rises mainly to the bracket figures of both roofs. These set the temple apart from most others. The *maṇḍapa* level of the building is selected here to reveal the quality of these carvings, each figure being about 4 feet high. To the viewer's right, Kṛṣṇa projects from the building at an acute angle with his feet braced on a carved beam end that projects from the wall. The pose of this most beloved incarnation of Viṣṇu is graceful and languid, with his elongated body comparable to sculptural styles of the southeast. His flute is missing, but the gestures of his hands with raised fingers are rhythmic. Floral patterns of his crown are repeated in a long garland that descends from his shoulders to his feet, and there are blossom-like flounces at his hips as well as jewelled girdle, sash, loin cloth, and bracelets. With the most subtle *tribhaṅga* stance and a color scheme of pale green and yellow, the Kṛṣṇa sculpture is softly restrained. It stands for the elegant mode of Kerala imagery.

The next figure seen, in circumambulatory movement to the left, is very different. Frontal, unmoving, and exaggerated, it represents Garuda as the valiant carrier of Visnu. Garuḍa raises both hands above his shoulders, showing the underside of long claws, and his direct stare is wide-eyed in the Kerala tradition. Serpent forms are entwined on his body of red and green, partly as a belt of three snakes that encircles his lower abdomen. The legs are stiff forms, but somewhat relieved by curling drapery. Most powerful in an abstract sense are the feathers of the figure's wings, because of their boldly staccato outline. Something of the flamboyance of sculpture in island Southeast Asia, especially Bali, might be broadly traced to this figure. And it is a comparison that often comes to mind in Kerala.

Another image, this one of a shapely female guardian with sword and other weapons, a skull cup, a severed head, and a crown of *nāga* snakes, stands for Kerala treatment of Tantric imagery as it is applied to represent Durgā, Bhagavatī, etc. Numerous images of Rāma in action with his bow are found at both levels. Hanumant, Rama's divine simian associate, is shown with a remarkably majestic visage, soft-eyed and beneficent with his powerful arms raised far above his head. His color is very yellow, as the face and eyes are very black. And at every corner large *vyāla* creatures are exciting as they are rendered by interlocking assemblages of sweeping curves. All of the images are in organic contrast to the severely pyramidal temple form and they bring it great animation along with doctrinal story.

C. Two Palghat District Temples

Tiruvegappura Śankaranārāyana Temple (Palghat District) and its Theatre

FIGURE 19 FIGURE 20

Theatrical references made regarding the Karikkad-ksetram temple in Malappuram District become much more concrete through examination of the Śaṅkaranārāyana temple in Tiruvegappura, Ottappalam Taluk, Palghat District. It dates from about the 14th century, with a *kūttambalam* theatre that was founded in the 15th or 16th century.[160] The temple complex is another that is like an academic model for it encloses a circular temple of Śiva, an apsidal temple of Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa, and a square temple dedicated to Viṣṇu in addition to the temple theatre. Wire netting keeps birds away from the courtyard, snakestones are gathered within, and a rare *praṇāla* with female support drains sacred liquid into the court.

PLATE 87

Kūttambalam architecture is unique to Kerala, in many ways capturing the essential soul of the region. It is sacred theatre, the performance of life in honor of otherworldly divinity. Other Hindu cultures are contented to present drama or dance inside the temple, or in the open air. But Kerala has developed a separate structure of major size and elaborate ornament to enclose certain performances, including those of the famous Kathākali school. And theatre architecture is a living artform, as represented by the newly constructed Nāṭya Gṛha theatre that was dedicated in central Kerala on October 1, 1977 for the performance of many forms of sacred theatre, after being constructed under the direction of D. Appukuttan Nair.

PLATE 88

The Śaṅkaranārāyana temple theatre is fairly plain on the exterior, with its roof taking up two-thirds of the total height of the building and its slatted walls sloping inward at the bottom to meet a high stone foundation. There is superb balance in the intersection of the sloping roof with the outward slant of the walls as they meet at a 45 degree angle, and the severe geometry is calmed by scallopped, vertical posts at intervals along the horizontal slats, as well as by the wave-effect of the roof tiles. Three small *stūpis* are a weightless note at the very top of the building, and the structure itself is easily approached in its placement between two *prākāra* walls.

PLATE 89

Inside, the theatre consists of a rectangular space with a stage elevated about 1 foot from the floor at the narrow back end. This construction has its own separate roof, mounted with elephant tusks, that flank a small Vaisnava image. Shiny round columns support the pyramidal interior roof, and a portable shrine with sculptural image and color prints of Kṛṣna, lamps, and offering vessel has been set up on the front of the stage. The stage is covered over by a nine-part ceiling with directional deities of the type often seen in a *namaskāra maṇḍapa.* A dressing area is at the back, where it is screened from the audience that sits on the floor of the spacious theatre room. Rectangular columns of wood and of stone support the massive theatre superstructure, and considerable light enters between the wall slats.

The main ceiling is most striking and seemingly most illogical, with its pent roof understructure of beams and planks supplemented by a web of trusses that culminate in nonfunctional wooden pendants, lathe-turned and brightly painted, that are suspended like stalagtites. They are the same pendant elements that are sometimes found hanging from the underside of temple gables or roofs, but more abundant. They make the *kūttambalam* interior still more extraordinary, even visionary.

PLATE 90

Taliyil Śiva at Ongallur (Palghat District), Frolic upon the Walls

A second temple, that of Ongallur Taliyil Śiva in Kalladipatta near Patambi, suffers from neglect, as it is surrounded by overgrown grounds and crumbling *prākāra* walls, but its highly detailed laterite walls still survive. From a distance, the monument does not look promising for art, despite its two-roof height, because the fields around it are not well kept and the tile roofs over its attendant buildings are collapsing. The outer *prākāra* is partly gone, suggesting that upkeep is too large a task for local trustees to manage unaided. The first gable seen is on the cloister structure and it is not impressive, looking like a cardboard cutout, at least in its bargeboards with very flimsy pinnacle. Yet there is a worn but important outer balustrade in stone, of lateral entry variety, and the laterite walls atop granite base of the *srikovil* have received fresh white paint so that its three-dimensional rhythm come through clearly.

PLATE 91

Walls are activated by great repetition of vertical niches and false doors of *panjara* miniature shrines that are topped by *nāsikā* windows with faces within. False brackets and adorned columns become fanciful as they support flocks of parrots, peacocks, and *haṁsa* birds. Human faces laugh everywhere like carnival masks, and fat dwarfs frolic along the cornices in crowded chorus-lines of sometimes mildly erotic poses. Angels fly and animals do battle in the plastered stone carvings, so that one must look hard for a restrained representation, like that of a four-armed Śiva in teaching pose that rests over the only functional doorway, on the south side of the building. The temple at Ongallur yields surprises, and thus calls for caution against dismissing monuments that appear at first glance to be in ruin. K. V. Soundara Rajan notes that an original *mukha maṇḍapa* was

PLATE 92

evidently replaced by a simple low roof, and that the temple seems never to have had a proper cloister, *namaskāra maṇḍapa, gopura-dvāra* as gateway, or *kūttambalam,* and that the tile roof appears to be a replacement. He attributes the temple to the 13th or 14th century on the basis of its fine stone carving and early Vijayanagar influences in style, and he makes the interesting observation that this work represents the end of a more purely stone stage in architecture, before woodwork development had supplanted the stone idiom and craftsmanship.[161]

CHAPTER TWELVE

Central Kerala—Masterworks in Wood and Paint

A. Trichur District

TRICHUR, ERNAKULAM, AND Kottayam Districts, with their extensive network of inland waterways and long history of international contacts, are centers in terms of more than geography. Some of the most important temples of the Hindu world are found in this land of Paraśurāma as goals of pilgrims from the entire sub-continent. As Paśupatinātha in Nepal is renowned to all Siva devotees, the 16th century temple of Guruvayur draws worshippers of Kṛṣṇa. The Trichur area attracts worshippers to some of India's most dramatic festivals, attended by crowds of elephants, corps of drummers, and fireworks, while concentrating mass worship at a series of related shrines. If Hindu culture may still be judged as an entity apart in world civilization, then central Kerala is one of its most sheltered locales. The following pages treat a representative group of temples from the three districts of central Kerala, with special reference to their arts in wood and paint.

PLATES 93, 94, 95, 96

The monuments included here take this study into "Middle Kerala" where some influence continues to be seen from interior India beyond the walls of the Western Ghāts. And they are often buildings of *nirandhāra* type with single wall *srikovil* construction, thus no inner ambulatory. [162] This is a major difference from the plans of most northern monuments, but central temples remain largely local in style and organization so that the region may still be considered a heartland. This analysis begins with Trichur District, and it is important to note that the Mahārājas of Cochin established a 16th century capital in Trichur City, with their palace near the hilltop temple of Śiva, Vadakkunathan, where Paraśurāma made his last appearance. [163]

Buildings and Saints—Thiruvanchikulam (Trichur District)

The scale of buildings is sometimes very grand in central Kerala, with the eastern of two gateways at the Thiruvanchikulam Śiva temple in Cranganore reaching unusual size. Everything about the structure and ornament of the *gopura-dvāra* is local, but its three-roofed scale is so great as to call attention to the gateway as imposing artwork in its own right. One is reminded of the prominence of *gopura* structures around temple cities like that of Mīnākṣī of Madurai in Tamil country, although the forms of the gates are entirely different. Design at Thiruvanchikulam remains basically horizontal, because of the roof ridge lines and the projection of wings at both its front and back sides. Thus the gateway harmonizes with the full temple environment in a special way.

PLATE 97

Gateway sculpture is always simpler and more restrained than that of a *srikovil.* Granite provides a fairly plain foundation, and from this rise laterite walls that are carved with finely rendered false windows and false doors of the general types described above. Wooden brackets are thin, quite plain, and non-supportive beneath the roof. Small, slatted balcony windows are seen on each side of the second roof level, while the space under the third roof is enclosed by walls of wooden slats. Four gables at the top level to the four directions are filled with elegant columns, repeated capitals, and pendants, all made of wood. Three metal *stūpis* crown this roof, with light "petals" around their globular forms. The tower imparts a mood of formality and dignity appropriate to the beginning of a processional path that moves through a second porch, with its single tile roof supported by four plain and massive stone columns, toward the cloister walls of the second *prākāra,* with its small cups for a thousand oil lamps. To the volumetric impact of structure must always be added the visionary poetry of light, especially at festival time.

The *srikovil* is, as always, the final goal of pilgrims to Thiruvanchikulam and it is honored with copper roofing that would not be appropriate to a gateway. Its walls are still more sculptural than those of the gateway, with very evolved pilaster patterns and elongated pierced windows, all whitewashed, and it has large figural roof brackets made of wood. It is oriented to the same four directions as the gate,with similar projections on the second and uppermost roof, but the gables, of *mahā nāsikā* type, are curved. The *srikovil* is like a softened, more precious, and smaller version of the gatehouse, but it is a space of enclosure, not mere passage. It contains important metal images, from the 17th-18th centuries, of Siva Natarāja and others. And it is guarded by stone *dvārapāla* figures. Its walls bear murals portraying Rāma and others in five panels, for a total of 105 square feet.[164] *Mahābhārata* battle is partial subject. The *srikovil* is attended by a *namaskāra maṇḍapa, balikkal maṇḍapa, mukha mandapa,* and four lesser shrines, including one to the Saptamatṛ, seven mother goddesses, that is immediately to the south of the Śiva building. K.V. Soundara Rajan dates the earliest reconditioning of the temple to the 10th-11th century and notes that its tower was altered in 1895.[165] Early Kulaśekhara associations are important here, and the location is often identified with the earliest Chera capital Vañji (Karur), but archaeological excavation has unearthed no cultural deposits from before the ninth century.[166] With the revival of Chera power around 800 A.D., King Kulaśekharapuram did establish his capital at Mahodayapuram, now Thiruvanchikulam, and commerce flourished there. The ruler himself identified with Kulaśekhara-āḻvār, one of the twelve great Vaiṣṇava saints. This saint and the Śaiva saint Cheramān Perumāḷ Nāyanār were patrons of the temple. It is possible that the temple was in fact built by the latter saint, along with Sundaramūrti. With these figures legend melds with fact.

PLATE 98

PLATES 99, 100

FIGURES 21, 22

Tirukkulaśekharapuram (Trichur District)

Near Thiruvanchikulam is the important temple of Kṛṣṇa at Tirukkulaśe-

kharapuram. It is an early monument from the 10th-11th century also, with many later modifications.[167] Of great historical and religious significance, as previously noted, is that Kulaśekhara was a contemporary of the Advaita philosopher Śaṅkarāchārya who had such great impact throughout the sub-continent, and that the temples treated here date from a period of great spiritual rebirth in Kerala. Fervent devotion and patronage are evident in new artistic accomplishments like that of "the use of laterite in executed sculptures of consummate skill"[168] to represent *devakosthas,* wall niches with deity forms. Successor to Kulaśekhara was Rājaśekharavarman, who became the saint Cheramāṉ Perumāḷ Nāyanār as recorded in Valapalli inscriptions *(Travancore Archaeological Series,* Vol. V, pp. 104-114) and both are remembered as great religious teachers. They sought to bring devotees to a new philosophy as well as to new temples.[169]

PLATE 101

At Tirukkulaśekharapuram an 11th century inscription belongs to about the time of the beginning of the Kollam Era and a new age of the *Bhakti* cult, with the temple itself said to be already two centuries old. It also mentions a Taḷi or "assembly in charge of the temple" wih its president, the Taḷiyādhikāri, and this is an important preview of institutions that still administer the temples of Kerala.

The monument does not have a *namaskāra-maṇḍapa* as part of its original scheme, recalling its early foundation, and its *deva-koṣṭhas* are unusual in Kerala because of their enclosed standing images. Even the *dvārapāla* figures are so enclosed. Early origin is also revealed by the *sandhara* interior with its *garbha gṛha* walls rising to the same height as the outer walls, rather than supporting a separate and domical roof over the *sanctum.*[170] A single high space reaches to the top of the two-roof structure.[171] There are six subsidiary shrines, including a major one of *sandhara* plan dedicated to Śiva. This latter structure, like the Kṛṣṇa shrine, has openings on all four cardinal points. In total, this complex is one of the most important in Kerala for its historical significance and for the early evolution of temple art.

A Simple Temple and its God—Tayanakavu Sāstā (Trichur District)

Tayanakavu Sāstā is a little-known monument in Choondal village in Trichur District that has lost most of its woodcarvings by being stripped of whatever could be removed. The courtyard is small and somewhat cramped and the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* is very plain except for some coconut offerings suspended from its ceiling, and ordinary popular prints that represent Kṛṣṇa and others. A gable over the *srikovil* entrance shelters some detailed carvings within its pedestrian frame. None of these elements merits special attention, yet the temple is well worth visiting. This is because its double doors open to reveal a fine metal image of Śāstā, particular patron of Kerala. The *sandhara* space in front of the sculpture is filled with suspended and pedestal oil lamps, pitchers and bowls of offerings, portable bronze images, incense, offering spoons or ladles, and abundant flower garlands. Humble in size and very private, the inner room is clearly a house for its divine occupant and even a reminder of domestic patterns in Kerala.

PLATE 102

Ariyannur Temple (Trichur District) and its Females

At Ariyannur Temple in Kandanissery another small shrine room is easily glimpsed, along with a 10-inch bronze representation of Bhagavatī. This figure of the patron goddess of Kerala is of the type that is brought outside of the *garbha gṛha* to receive special offerings, to take part in religious festivals, and for daily circumambulations of the temple, both within and outside of the cloister walls. The figure is a most graspable and concrete embodiment of divine energy, and it comes closest to the average devotee. The main image of the temple is also made of metal and it stands about 4 feet high, representing the goddess Harikanyaka of the Vaiṣṇava pantheon. Her sword-wielding guardians, made of stone and flanking the *srikovil* entry, are also female.

PLATE 103

Ceiling carvings of the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* have not disappeared here, as at the previous temple, although the central panel has been removed for restoration. Through the empty panel space it is possible to view the underside of the roof itself. It appears to have a stylized lotus carved on the underside of the *stūpi* as pinnacle, even though this part of the roof structure is not meant to be seen. Eight panels present directional gods, with Brahmā occupying the center position, as is usual. Corner figures of the square configuration are turned at an angle, so that the grouping more clearly radiates from the center than in most examples. Since Kerala design does not include such "active" symbols as the *āmalaka* sun-disc that often crowns stone *śikhara* temples, this ceiling pattern of movement and expansion takes on added importance. And the portable Bhagavati provides very real movement as she is carried through the grounds.

The *balīpiṭha* or stone pedestal to receive oblations is sheltered by a *balikkal maṇḍapa* that provides access to the usual platforms that join the cloister. These platforms are unusually deep and wide, providing more than ample storage place for horns, drums, and other musical instruments of the worship services. The entry has slatted wooden walls and a plain ceiling with finely rendered brackets and cornice carvings below it. The gable of this projecting structure is very tactile in the overall pattern of miniature niches that fills its back wall. The porch with its stone *balīpiṭha* is preceded by an open pavilion with tiled roof and followed by the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* as one proceeds to the shrine proper. This latter structure nearly abuts the *sopāna* balustrade of the front-entry stairs to the *srikovil*, and the two sloping roofs above actually do touch each other. Ariyannur Temple represents the conjested plans that can result when so many preliminary buildings are crowded before a shrine proper, just as it illustrates how intimate the sacred spaces can be. Finally, in the narrow courtyard, mention might be made of a *praṇāla* that emerges from the room of the goddess through the mouth of a *makara*, for this particular form is not typical in Kerala.

Kūḍalmānikkam at Irinjalakuda (Trichur District), its Image and Theatre Plan

A center of the Chera Dynasty existed around Irinjalakuda in Trichur District, with an inscription found there of the eleventh regnal year of King Sthānu-Ravi,

corresponding to 855 A.D. The king is successor of Kulaśekharavarman and Rājaśekharavarman and the time of the evident beginning of structural temple architecture in Kerala. The inscription and other records found in the area suggest that Sthānu-Ravi followed a policy of religious tolerance. It was a time of the arrival of Islam, the visit to Malabar by the Arab traveller Sulaiman, and close maritime contact with China.[172] As always, times of economic success are mirrored in a spurt of temple construction. Dated by inscriptions, the temple belongs to the 10th century, although the inner shrine may be older. The masterful woodwork that can be seen today is a product of the 18th century.[173] The monument may have originally been a Jain structure, dedicated to Bharata, the son of the first Jina Ṛishaba and brother of Bāhubalin, rather than Bharata the brother of Rāma, as celebrated today,[174] but there is no conclusive record that this is true. Clifford Reis Jones notes that there is a Jain stone image of the 9th or 10th century set up in a modern shrine at Puruvasseri nearby.[175] The 855 A.D. inscription remains a key document at Kūḍalmānikkam.

The main deity of the temple is Kūḍal-Māṇikkasvāmin, a form of Viṣṇu that is also represented in the murals of Mattancheri palace in Cochin. According to common belief, a sage found four images floating in a river representing Rāma, Lakṣmana, Shathrugṇa, and Bharata, and that he installed them at Triprayur, Muzhikulam, Padiyur, and Kūḍalmānikkam respectively. The last shrine, with a female image that is said to radiate divine light "as from a ruby,"[176] is circular with two copper-covered roofs and with no *mukha maṇḍapa,* but a very large *namaskāra maṇḍapa* with lattice-screened walls and pyramidal copper roof. Some figurative brackets are mounted under the upper roof of the temple and four seated directional figures are among them. But the lower floor is much more singular, for the whitewashed walls above the *adhiṣṭhāna* are made up largely of pierced wooden screens of incredible detail. They are lacy yet angular, light yet forceful, decorative yet specifically symbolic. Bracket figures, a platoon of deities standing at attention, are augmented by dozens of small characters in high relief, including Narasiṃha, carved of wood. Rows of figures alternate with lotus flowers, all within rectangular frames that are entwined with florid vegetation. Reliefs here recapture the brocade-like lushness of contemporary mural painting at Mattancheri and Padmanābhapuram. More bold and direct are grotesque *dvārapālas* carved of wood at the *srikovil* entrance. Next to the lefthand figure is a bright Hari-Hara that divides the combined Viṣṇu/Siva form down the middle in rainbow colors.

PLATE 104

On the spacious grounds between the outer and inner *prākāra* walls stands a very large and well proportioned *kūttambalam,* one of the finest in Kerala. It is the kind of structure that must date back at least to as early as the 10th century and the growth of Kuṭiyāṭṭam Sanskrit drama. No such ruins are found from before the 13th century, however, and no standing theatre predates the 16th century.[177]

PLATE 105

As it stands, the theatre is a restoration of the 19th century, and it was built

under the patronage of the Rāja of Cochin,[178] with a royal residence kept at Irinjalakuda as well as at Trichur where another temple theatre was also constructed. A similar structure was built under Cochin patronage at Tirumuzhikulam.[179] These are rectangular buildings, but Chengannur is the location of an unusual oval theatre that is reproduced in a model in the Trivandrum Museum Sculpture Gallery.

Clifford Reis Jones describes the typical *kūttambalam* plan as a rectangular great hall that encloses a second *mandapa* that is always square. Entrances divide the side walls on an axis into two main areas of the interior, with the number of doors not always limited to two. The stage has four pillars, with its forward edge always beginning at a line just above the central point of the total structure, a point that is directly below the central *stūpi* at the converging axis of the four cardinal directions. There are usually 16 minor columns and 24 outer columns supporting the theatre superstructure. Grillwork walls allow air to circulate within the large interior space. The walls may be slanted outward with horizontal slats, creating a basket-like interior.[180]

PLATE 106

All of the above criteria are satisfied at the Kūḍalmānikkam temple theatre, with its covered stage, horizontally slatted walls, and high stone columns that are squared at the bottom and many-sided above. These rise to support the beam network on the underside of the steeply pitched roof that ends in three *stūpis*. As in any wooden structure, the roof portion is joined by morticing and pegging with wooden pins and piercing nails *(valaya)*.[181] Wooden pendants *(bālakūṭam)* hang from the ceiling, functioning both as ornaments and as pegs at the junctions of intersecting beams, as at the well-known theatre of Haripad, and the space is once again extraordinary. Action on the colorful stage, with its brilliantly lacquered red and yellow columns, is very exciting. There is recitation of sacred texts, or popular *chakkiyarkuthu* entertainment that is the work of the *cākyār* performer, presented with the accompaniment of *mrdaṅga* drums and huge ceramic pots as percussion instruments. The audience comes and goes, but the performance continues, sometimes in cycles of many days. And by it the temple is honored just as the audience is blessed.

PLATE 107

Guruvayur

Guruvayur Temple, one of the greatest Kṛṣṇa shrines in India, is both too simple and too impressive to describe. Its parts are those of almost any Kerala temple: long road of approach, gatehouse, repeated *maṇḍapas, srikovil,* subsidiary shrines around a courtyard circumambulatory. There are ruins of mural paintings and some sculpture, but they were much restored after a recent fire. Precious materials are everywhere, as in a golden flagstaff and flimsy replicas of the arms, legs, ears and other affected parts of worshippers that are given as offerings. None of this is indicative of the monument's importance, however. It is known as the creation of Guru, preceptor of the Devas, and Vāyu, Lord of the Winds. Guruvayur is a great religious center, activated by the imbuing presence of the

infant Kṛṣṇa. It is not valued for its physical presence but for its sanctity. Rheumatism and paralysis are cured here. This investigator did not make notes, draw details, or take photographs at Guruvayur. No questions were asked. An answer was remembered: "In the temple our eyes are closed." The temple provides a spiritual experience that, at least in this case, will not be reduced to words.

B. Ernakulam District: Temples of a Crossroads

Vamanamūrti (Ernakulam District), Severe and Early

Vamanamūrti at Trikkakkarai is a much renovated circular temple with its interior passage now blocked. It is covered by a single copper roof, has no murals on its severely plain walls and few carvings. Yet it is mentioned here because in its somewhat remote location in Ernakulam District it shows long-standing Kerala traditions without foreign elements. Many inscriptions date the monument to the 10th through 13th centuries. It presents extremely simple, almost pure geometry. with only about a dozen *vyāla* brackets to punctuate the *srikovil* walls. There is no proper *ardha maṇḍapa,* only a small roof extension from the *srikovil* entrance with its direct stair approach and *vyāla* balustrades, but this covers a stone *balipitha.* There is a single roof for both interior walls, not a separate interior roof. A *namaskāra maṇḍapa* stands before the shrine on its own stone platform with a varnished ceiling, lacking color, that is carved to show the familiar directional deities in floral frames along with Brahmā as creator as the center of nine squares. These carvings are very refined, in contrast to the basic parts of the rest of the temple. There is a kind of compromise with past traditions, for the complex was rebuilt after a disastrous fire about 20 years ago.

PLATES 108, 109

The jewel-like finish of its ceiling carvings is found also in the interior image of the temple, representing Viṣṇu with four arms and dressed in brocade with a nimbus of shimmering lamplight at his head. Attendant gods are Śāstā at the northwest corner of the inner courtyard (a south-western placement is more typical) and Mahālākṣmi at the southwest corner. A *praṇala* drains into the court from a *kanṭha* recessed moulding in the *adhisṭhāna.* And an unusual feature is that the entire wall, from lower base up to wooden roof structure, is made of granite rather than laterite. Plain or not, the temple was obviously made for eternity. In this it relates to Kerala's very earliest constructed temples, like the low towers at Vilinjam, with their small cubical spaces, which may be of as early as the 8th century.[182]

Santānagopāla-Kṛṣṇasvāmin of Radiating Gods (Ernakulam District)

Tripunittura, six miles from Ernakulam city on the way to Pazhur, is represented here by a large temple that is surrounded by an inner *prākāra* as open framework that becomes a myriad of flame lights when its oil lamps are in use at special times. Like the previous example, it is round and has a single roof of copper, but an addition to the temple sets it apart from almost every other Kerala

PLATE 110

building. The addition consists of a set of bronze deities, each about 3 feet tall, that are attached all around the exterior of the *srikovil* as a radiating assembly of gods. A kind of net of rods protects the *srikovil,* like a ceiling over the court, and this interrupts the circular design somewhat, but the images still serve to remind that universal movement around the cosmic axis is both revolutionary and evolutionary. Bright golden polish marks the metal sculptures, so that they are a most precious grouping. Some of the sculptures are themselves groups, such as that which portrays the battle between the valiant goddess Durgā and the demonic Mahiṣa. In contrast to the drama of the fight, Ganeśa seems languid and unusually graceful in his relaxed yet elephantine pose.

Elephant heads made of metal circle the exterior of the wall also, and these lead to life-size *dvārapāla* guardians that stand on either side of the temple door. The protectors are made of stone that is highly polished to an almost metallic finish. Wildly active in dance postures of the *tāṇdava* type that Ananda Coomaraswamy relates to pre-Āryan deities, half-god and half-demon,[183] the guardians are frightful and attractive at the same time. This is due to decorative appeal, as is true of other metal additions to structure that are so rare in Kerala temples.[184] And the *dvārapāla* figures are the biggest, most grotesque, and most lavishly ornamented of the many sculptures. Their physique, long fingernails, and grimacing mouths call for further comparison to contemporary works in Java, Bali, and possibly other parts of Southeast Asia.

PLATE 111

The foundation at Tripunittura is dated 947 A.D. A golden figure about 4 feet high and seated as if on a throne occupies the *garbha gṛha,* continuing the theme of precious substances for heavenly reference on earth. The sacred ground is marked by a monumental gate, but especially by an exceptionally large vertical oil lamp of many levels made of blackened metal. Within the gate a flagstaff rises much higher and it is still better suited to the glittering world of radiating gods inside, for it is made of gold.

Peruntirukkoyil Siva Temple at Pazhur (Ernakulam District)

A spacious compound at Udayamperur/Pazhur in Kanayanur Taluk holds a small interior court with one more circular temple, having a *sandhara* passage inside. A *liṅga* about 5 feet high occupies the shrine room, with a halo reflector like those that are often given to anthropomorphic sculptures. Guardians at the door are very ferocious and presented in poses that twist the body axis. They are made of wood dabbed with silver paint. But more impressive than these are roof bracket carvings that are somewhat wider than the narrow rectangles usually seen. Among them is a rhythmic *mohini* beneath a tree, and two scrawny Rishis with walking staffs in their hands who each kick one leg in the air. The latter are some of the most active carvings in the south, with drapery swirling about their bodies and limbs projecting beyond the normal strut matrix. Behind and between these are murals painted on a plaster coating that hides underlying granite blocks.

PLATE 112 PLATES 113, 114 PLATE 115

Mural paintings at this temple are marked by sharp, clear lines of

reddish-brown color, and they present fairly small, limited scenes all over the walls. Details of setting and running borders divide the subjects of the paintings, which include a horrific portrayal of Narasimha, a calmly seated Hari-Hara, soldiers, and devotees. Linear movement repeats the undulations of actual poses all around the *srikovil,* as blessed waters pour forth from a *praṇāla* that issues from a *makara* maw and is supported by a dwarf *bhūta.*

PLATE 116

A *namaskāra maṇḍapa* holds a stone carving of Nandi facing the shrine in devotion, below a ceiling that is well-carved with quite typical directional figures inside of beautifully rendered floral frames, and with remarkably detailed cornice friezes below the nine squares. The cornice is divided into three registers. The upper register is filled with enrolled vines and *nasika* niches, the middle register has foliage and projecting elephants including some that support deities, and the lower register is covered with tiny figures in battle. Cornice carvings are a contrast, then, to the large bracket and *dvārapāla* carvings, although all are very animated as they harmonize with the oscillating compositions of the murals.

A remarkable carving that is quite different from any of the above occupies the ceiling of a small outer *balikkal maṇḍapa* which shelters a 5-foot high *balipīṭha.* Dimly illuminated through slatted walls below, the large relief represents a voluptuous goddess, Lakṣmī, within the frame of a large open lotus blossom. The medallion-like sculpture is about 4 feet in diameter, perfectly round and perfectly calm in effect. A separate and smaller carving in the round of Garuda is attached to the wall at cornice level below the ceiling image. It is very active and asymmetrical with its wings spread wide.

PLATE 117

Every kind of sculptural art, especially in wood, is represented at Peruntirukkoyil Śiva temple. Wooden pieces are supplemented by metal rafter shoes, fairly infrequent today, that protect the fanning beam ends from moisture below the *srikovil* roof while displaying low relief designs that are decorative, narrative, or symbolic. At this temple the brass additions are simply marked by geometric borders and bosses for the hanging of pendants Lathe-turned wooden pendants of large size project down from the beams near the rafter shoes. All of these details are overwhelmed, however, by the visual strength of the huge conical roof covered with copper, bold and red.

PLATE 118

Peruntirukkoyil is noted for an inscription from the twentieth regnal year of Kodai-Ravivarman that records donations to the temple, evidently by a Chera queen named Seramān-Mādevi, in the early 10th century. [185] Her gift consisted of lands perpetually devoted to support of the sacred center and its programs. This temple is also noted for its size, since it has evidently the largest circular *vimāna* (the entire *srikovil* from *adhiṣṭhāna* to *stūpi)* in all of Kerala. Circulár temples predominate in the Middle phase of stylistic development, particularly in central and southern Kerala, with this example measuring 55-¾ feet in diameter. Most such buildings compare at from 20 to 40 feet across.[186] Second to Peruntirukkovil, and only slightly smaller, is Ettumanur Mahādeva in Kottayam District. Emphasis upon circular temple patterns is one of the most remarkable develop-

ments of Kerala art and a feature that separates the culture from that of its neighbors.

Inside the temple is found a miniature *vimāna,* so characteristic of much Dravidian architecture in South India. Its back side, opening through a small door toward the west, honors Pārvati, while the main door to the east opens toward the Śiva shrine inside. This room is separately roofed as an individual "temple." The inner structure is square and very plain on its own high base, and with its own six-step entry. Outside and around it, within the *srikovil,* are two rows of pillars aligned in circles of 12 and 14 pillars each. They are alternately square and octagonal with much circumambulatory space between them. Six steps lead from the courtyard level to the top of the *adhisthana* and then six more rise to the level of the *liṅga* inside the *vimāna,* so that this focus of worship is further removed and more mysterious than most.

The *namaskāra maṇḍapa* as porch structure before the *srikovil* has been briefly discussed above, but it should be further noted that it is a later addition, revealed by inscription (*Travancore Archaeological Series,* VI, pp. 63-65) to have been added in the 13th or 14th century, and that such an element has no place in the austere plan as it must have existed in the 12th century.[187] There are small openings on the northern and southern sides of the structure as well as to east and west, with a *praṇāla* drain opening directly to the north.

Śrī Durgā at Cheranallur (Ernakulam District) and Middle Phase Art

Cheranallur of Kanayanur Taluk in the environs of Cochin is not a famous site, but its temple of Śrī Durgā belongs to the district as it reveals merging currents of northern, southern, eastern, and even foreign influences in style and organization. This monument to Durgā, as war goddess whose origin here is traced by A. Sreedhara Menon to the deity Kottavai of the early Dravidians, is a grand temple in terms of its scale and its scenic location on a steeply sloping rise of land that is surrounded by a river on three sides. Forest is thick near the buildings, with an especially large banyan and platform at the end of an approach from the road. The east side descends to a bathing place by stone stairs that provide the most impressive approach to the monument. There is no outer *prākāra* as separate wall, so that subsidiary shrines are located in the open, outside of the cloister. Peaked-roof buildings, many with open slat windows, are built into the cloister walls with their framework of oil lamps. PLATE 119

An outer porch contains a *balipīṭha* and is entered beneath a fine gable, brightly painted, with clear miniature carvings. Over the stone platform is a ceiling with *dikpalā* directional guardians, and Brahmā once again at the center. The Churning of the Sea of Milk is present, as before, as subject for a frieze at cornice level, and full figures about 12 inches high stand atop elephants in bracket position. *Nāga* kings and queens are shown in kneeling attitudes of devotion with their hands in *namaskāra* position, also on elephants, while below them a border of wonderfully curvaceous peacocks take the place of more usual vegetal motifs. In total, it is a familiar scheme. PLATE 120

Interconnected cloister and porch structures convey earth-hugging horizontality through their wall and roof lines, but a typically southern feature is the gilded flagstaff located within the courtyard. It has fully round bronze figures in miniature all around its base. The *srikovil* has an attached *maṇḍapa* that is preceded by a freestanding *namaskāra maṇḍapa.* This larger pavilion is marked by one of the most intricate ceilings so far encountered, like an elaboration of the elaborate. Carving here approaches the kind of bewildering multiplicity that makes the ceilings of certain Hoysala buildings fade into sponge-like depths of darkness from what might be honeycomb clarity in brighter light. It is likely that by the Middle Phase of Kerala art, Karnataka models were indeed having their effect, at least on southern royalty, and this contact may underlie the confounding detail of the Śrī Durgā porch. Parts that were admired earlier for their crispness, at temples such as Ponmeri Śiva in Cannanore District for example, are now overlain and multiplied so that general texture becomes more striking than group identity. A host of figures, dozens of *nāsikā* niches, miniature *vimāna* towers, figural brackets, lotus flowers, and directional figures are so numerous that without paint, which is sadly lacking at Cheranallur, identity is nearly lost. The breathless confusion of Tamil Nadu *gopura* towers is almost duplicated by these wood carvings, at least without the clarification of color.[188]

PLATES 121, 122

Courtyard space is rather confined around the *srikovil,* which is square and topped by two copper roofs. There is a large gable over its attached *maṇḍapa* and four gables around the top roof. The laterite walls are whitewashed and have some very active animal figures interspersed among typical false niche, window, and tower parts on all sides. There are figural brackets made of wood on both levels. Again, groups of anthropomorphic forms are found, and the matrix setting of each carving is a broad vertical rectangle. In one carving, two male figures are shown doing battle with their legs hooked together, while a bracket Rishi prays with arms uplifted in an especially narrow composition, an attendant female carries a basket of fruit on her head in one sculpture, and typically virile *vyāla* monsters leap out as brackets at all four corners of each roof. Mural fragments below them on the walls of the ground floor are very few, but at least one is remarkable for its aggressive representation of Durgā thrusting her spear. An eruption of color and line surrounds, but does not contain her in whirling patterns of contour, costume, and jewelry. Unlike art of the porch ceiling, there is no visual confusion in the mural art of Cheranallur.

PLATE 123

PLATE 124

Suitably calm, a half life-size image of Durgā occupies the double-walled *srikovil,* her face bright yellow with sandalwood paste. An unusual feature is that of dual *praṇāla* drains that project from the structure, one from the *garbha gṛha* proper and one from the *ardha maṇḍapa* before it. The first of these is larger and more fully carved, with an unusual treatment that involves two *makara* faces, one at the wall connection and one at the tip of the spout. Drain pattern is but one

feature among many that call for further study at this almost unpublished temple of Durgā.

C. Kottayam: Key Monuments

Vaikom Śiva (Kottayam District) and its Murals

Vaikom is outstanding and unusual in part because of its elliptical plan and its visionary mural paintings. Its total effect is that of essential volume in space because of its enormous roof that makes up, like that of an ordinary thatched hut, more than two-thirds of the full height of the structure. It is covered with copper and crowned by a shining golden *stūpi* that is a fitting pinnacle for one of the best known temples in Kerala. Also termed the Peruntirukkoyilappan, the Vaikom monument was founded in the 11th or 12th century and is dedicated to Śiva as Vaikkarattu-Bhatarakar. Wooden panels were added to its walls in the 15th-16th centuries, and its murals were restored for a second time in the 18th century.[189] Again, they were repainted after a fire in 1963, a disaster blamed on the fact that the Vadakkupurathupattu(*pūjā* to the goddess Kālī)had for long gone uncelebrated. In 1965 the ceremony was revived.[190] Both of these elements, wood and paint, harmonize well with figural roof struts, false window niches, pierced stone screens, four *bhadra* doors that are functional, and four pairs of life-sized *dvārapālas.* At Vaikom the sum of these familiar parts is something new.

PLATE 125 FIGURE 23

Subsidiary structures are also covered with copper shingles, including a *nālambalam* cloister and a *namaskāra-maṇḍapa.* An outer *gopura,* recently built, is tiled and very composite in style with much bright color. A porch raised over the *balipiṭha,* already termed as *balikkal-mandapa,* is carved with patterns that show Nāyaka patterns from the dynasty to the southeast. Its existence, and sculpture hall appearance, belong to the Late Phase of Kerala design. The temple, dedicated to Śiva, faces east. In its present form, it dates from no earlier than the 16th century. It is beautifully situated on the shores of Vembanad Lake between Alleppey and Cochin. It has power.

A regular pattern of worship at Vaikom is that of Sahasra Kalasam or bathing the deity with 1000 pots of water. It is a tradition that some say led to the paving of temple courtyards, simply to facilitate drainage. Another procedure that is constant is the feeding of pilgrims, giving Śiva at Vaikom the name Annadāna Prabhu, "Giver of Feasts." On the eighth night of the annual festival at the temple of Udayanapuram located 1½ miles north, an image of Subrahmanya is carried from the temple to Vaikom on an elephant, accompanied by music and fireworks. After a ceremonial bath *(arattu)* Subrahmanya is placed upon the lap of his father, Śiva, in the Vaikom *srikovil* and the two gods are worshipped together. It is especially auspicious for a worshipper to glimpse the reunited gods at the time when the *garbha grha* is first opened. Later, they are carried for one circuit around the temple in the outer *prākāra* space before they bid farewell to each other for another year as the son is carried home.

FIGURE 24

Although the elliptical ground plan of the temple is not often seen, it is

prescribed in the *Vāstu-śāstras.* The only other surviving Kerala example is found at Chengannur in Alleppey District and it is also dedicated to Śiva. The oval shape is easily measured, with east-west length of 57 feet and north-south width of 50 feet, but it is not readily apparent to the eye, so that the building is often described as circular. Visually, the temple has the same centrifugal composition of expanding form and color that has been described for circular shrines. Differences are of detail rather than overall impression.

This Siva temple is not exactly symmetrical. An interior plan shows that it contains a square *garbha gṛha* that is closer to the entrance side on the east than to the western, back side of the *srikovil.* H. Sarkar suggests that this room occupies a kind of miniature Drāviḍa shrine, [192] while K.V. Soundara Rajan calls its plan "irregular-circular." [193] Two rows of mostly wooden columns form a pair of ellipses in the *sandhara* space, 20 making up the outer row and 12 forming the inner. Six steps climb to the top of the *adhisthāna* before an inset *mukha maṇḍapa,* and six more ascend to the inner room which contains a *liṅga* on square *piṭha* pedestal as its activating presence. The outer stair is flanked by stone banisters that are carved with the forms of standing deities, while the inner *sopāna* is flanked by *phalaka* stone slabs. Interior light is diffused through pierced *gavākṣa* windows. As always, the spaces of *sāndhāra* and especially the *garbha grha* are highly charged. Simplified yet profound, the energized building is monumental in every sense.

Access to Vaikom Siva is afforded by a rare kind of extended portico that results from discontinuing the *bāhya-bhitti* or outer wall on either side of the entrance, as at the Śiva temple of Ettumanur and the Subrahmanya temple at Udayanapuram near Vaikom. [194] A high flagstaff of golden surface precedes the *balikkal maṇḍapa,* which has its own large *dvārapāla* forms made of stone in a style that recalls the great Tamil Nadu periods, and the same references are called to mind by low relief figures of saints and beauties on stone columns below a steeply slanted stone ceiling. In addition, lovely females of *devadāsi* type stand in high-relief devotion on stone columns along the cloister interior. A *namaskāra maṇḍapa* stands before the structure that is a singular landmark in the history of Kerala art: the *srikovil* itself.

Paintings produce special effects at Vaikom, their style being related to that of Mattancheri and other major mural sites. They have been restored and their colors are perhaps a bit too intense, but it should be remembered that the latest paintings at Mattancheri and Kṛsṇapuram palaces are also marked by very bright hues. Decadence is not apparent here. Vaikom Siva walls are poster-like in the easy readability of forms, resemble stage scenery in their simplification, and have the communicative directness of comic strips. But their intent is much more serious than that of any of those arts, for they convey directly the sacred story of Śiva and related Hindu doctrine.

PLATE 126

A major fire destroyed this Śiva monument between 1529 and 1539 A. D., according to temple chronicles of 1539, and the temple was then rebuilt and the

paintings made. There are 20 panels showing approximately 40 divine figures, and R. V. Poduval notes their effective combination of "clear-cut line with a singular purity and delicacy of colors" and their "commanding grandeur and power." [195] Stella Kramrisch judges the works at Ettumanur to be superior to the Vaikom paintings, but she also speaks of the "sumptuous heavy fabric" of Kerala painting in the 16th and 17th centuries in general, and notes the "bounteous girth" of painted deities that is "not that of the appearance of figures as they are seen in this world; it belongs to the Gods as beheld by their painter in Kerala. The world in which he thus beholds his Gods has no scenery or stage, no setting comparable to any actuality. It is the rich fabric woven by their presence; their shapes form the units of its pattern." [196] In one of the most lucid descriptions of Kerala painting from any period, she goes on to speak of the visual impact of gods in murals:

> ...there is nothing besides their presence. Nothing exists outside it. They occupy all space, and their ambient lines clasp it as much as they communicate their fullness to the many shapes which they engender; all are part of their presence and have no separate existence. Borne by the vastness of the appearance of the Gods, they are its adornments, jewelled clasps and rings which hold the bounteous shape within bonds as tight as are its outlines. These then are the confines of their all-filling, all-replenished presence; the encircling ornaments and raiments in which the pressure of the body of divine presence is felt and contained, and the capacious outline within which this presence confronts the devotee for whose sake it is displayed. [197]

The patterns that Kramrisch terms "spaceless, but voluminous" are indeed textile-like and rich, bold and undulating, so that the "inflated surface and ambient line are the most alive where they are combined in small units: finger-tips, toes and the flaming beads of jewelry." [198] As at the palaces discussed previously, the mural subjects are more than enclosed by line and color, they are brought to almost aggressive life by them. And this occurs in such a vigorous, intense way that Kerala style nearly always stands apart from other schools of Indian painting. Even the architectural parts of Vaikom walls are outlined by dotted white lines and the most complex, overlapping representations—Sāstā, Rāma, Pārvatī, Hari-Hara—remain individual, exciting designs. Similarly, the temple as a whole remains graspable and moving even as its parts dissolve into smaller but perfectly delineated compositions.

It must be noted that Vaikom was the setting for acts that led to implementation of an historic proclamation of 1936 which affected the future of all Indian society. It followed the Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924–25 that represents the first major success of the campaign to officially condemn untouchability. After 20 months of local argument, Mahatma Gandhi entered the discussions in Kerala that led to the opening of temple approach roads at Vaikom to all Hindus. By 1928, such roads were open throughout Travancore. There was another important event in the opening of Guruvayur temple to all Hindus, irrespective of caste, as approved in a referendum of 1932 by 70% of the voters. Then, on November 12, 1936, the following Temple Entry proclamation was released by Srī Chitra Balarama Varma, Mahārāja of Travancore. Mahatma Gandhi called it "a *smriti* which is the people's charter of spiritual emancipation." [199] It reads:

Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has, throughout the centuries, adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of Our Hindu subjects should by reason of birth of caste or community be denied the consolations and solace of the Hindu faith. We have decided and therefore declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by Us preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering and worshipping at the temples controlled by Us and Our Government

Vazhapalli Śiva Temple (Kottayam District) and its Carvings

The full story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* unfolds in 4-inch height around cornice-level carvings inside the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* of the temple of Mahādeva (Śiva) at Vazhapalli. Below this are found figurative brackets, while the usual planetary directional guardians fill the ceiling. Other sculptures in wood, larger in size, are found in wall panels about 5 feet high by 6 feet wide that entirely circle the wall of the circular *srikovil* to unfold epic and Purāṇic stories. These date from the 17th century, according to inscription *(Travancore Archaeological Series,* Vol. VII, p. 136), but the original temple belongs to the 12th-13th century. The base of the *srikovil* bears a Vāṭṭeḻuttu inscription of Kollam Era 840 (1665 A.D.). Many paintings are also applied to the walls, with such subjects as the coronation of Rāma and Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardinī.

PLATE 127

There are no subsidiary shrines at Vazhapalli and no single structure of monumental proportion. Rather, reduced geometry makes its impact felt once again in the circular and single roof temple, and this is softened and made profound by wood carving. Movement and meaning are both cinematic and direct in the sculptures, especially those of the cornice, with such scenes as the multiple birth of heroes and battle of the demoness capturing swirling, heady movement that is richly varied within the confines of a long rectangular frame. Taken with other regional carvings, like those at Ettumanur, these refined works make Kottayam District a major focus for the study of Kerala sculpture.

PLATE 128

Vazhapalli might be represented by a single small work carved on a cornice: the monkey figure of Hanumant who raises his hand in gesture of discourse while sitting comfortably cross legged on a cushioned pedestal among lotus flowers on the cornice. And all of the carvings of the *srikovil* add up to a revolving pantheon of infinite numbers and expression. They are a "high meridian of wood craft"[200] in South India.

The legend of Vazhapalli is that its image of Śiva was moved to its present location by Nambūtiri Brāhmaṇs who wished to escape from Buddhist influences. Gaṇapati worship is most popular here and an annual *utsavam* festival falls in the month of Menam (March/April). An early inscription at the site belongs to the reign of Rājaśekharavarman Kulaśekhara (820-844 A.D.). But even without any historical associations, it would remain a significant temple solely on the basis of what is done here with wood.

PLATE 129

Viṣṇu Temple Murals at Tirukkodithnam (Kottayam District)

Another circular temple, this one with two coppered roofs, is slightly earlier in foundation than the previous example, since it belongs to the 11th-12th centuries or even earlier. It is one of nine holy places of Tamil Vaiṣṇavism that are located in Kerala. [201] It once contained a *sāndhāra* ambulatory but this was closed off, perhaps at the time of mural painting in about the 17th century. The last feature is most important at Tirukkodithnam because of the unusual pattern produced by the works.

PLATE 130

Projections and recesses of wall and window niches are not part of the *tala* treatment at Tirukkodithnam. The surface of the wall is almost plain above the *adhiṣṭhāna* level, except for three false entries and one functional door. Therefore, its all-covering paintings give the only organization that the sweeping surface has, whereas the upper *tala* is punctuated by bracket figures and three-dimensional architectonic parts. The style of the mural paintings is much more subtle than at Vaikoṁ, but perhaps less dramatic because of the lack of solid color areas and saturated hues. They are fully evolved Kerala works, nonetheless, with large scale subjects including Viṣṇu Anantaśayin on patterns of the cosmic ocean that look embroidered, Rāma in the forest, Śāstā hunting on horseback, the court of Indra whose body is marked with a thousand eyes, displays of *pūrṇa kalaśa* fertility symbols, and battle scenes enlivened by the static power of criss-crossed arrows and spears. Śiva and Viṣṇu subjects occur together in the allover wall patterns. And even the door-guardians are painted, not sculpted. Once again, a detail can stand for the whole, as a single peacock floats across the upper wall by means of sketchy line without overpainting plus pale washes on white plaster ground. The artist's facility of brushwork is very impressive, with the finished work lighter and finer than almost any comparable wall painting. Praised in classic Alvār songs, the monument deserves its fame for its physical as well as its religious associations.

PLATE 131

PLATE 132

PLATE 133

The Face of Śrī Subrahmaṇya and Perunayil Temple (Kottayam District)

A small temple at Perunayil near Charganacheri is circular and quite plain. The shrine belongs to Subrahmaṇya, also called Skanda Kārttikeya, who was well established as a major god of Kerala even in the Early Phase of Keraḷa art. As always, he is remembered as god of war, conqueror of the demon Tāraka, and he is supported by the peacock Paravani. As a bachelor, he is called Kumāra, although he is also described as having a wife called Kaumārī or Devasena. The Subrahmaṇya image here is simple, but in some representations he has six heads and six pairs of arms and legs. In one account he was born of the seed of Agni thrown into a fire of sacrifice, but essentially he is the son of Śiva. In this *garbha gṛha* he is shown in two-armed form carrying *shakti* and *kaṭi-hasta.*

Visitors to the temple pass an exterior *balipīṭha* and enter a cloister by way of a *gopura* to pass through interconnected structures that include a *namaskāra maṇḍapa* and face a recessed *ardha mandapa* and main door of direct approach on

the east side of the *srikovil.* There are functional side doors as well, for entry to the *sandhara* passage, and a western opening with lateral-approach stairway having Siva and Pārvatī carved on its stone balustrade. Wooden *dvārapālas* guard all four doors. There are no subsidiary shrines. The *garbha gṛha* is circular and surrounded by close-set pillars.

On a much smaller scale than at temples discussed above, the *vimāna* is painted, with only two panels of murals remaining on the southeast part of the wall. The first panel represents Amba and Sāstā's hunt, and the second shows Śiva and Pārvatī in the upper part along with Brahmā, Visnu, Indra, Sarasvatī, and other attendant deities around them. In the lower register, devotees in contemporary costumes include Dutch and other European characters. The paintings probably date no earlier than to the end of the 18th century. [202]

Renovations of the 17th and 18th centuries are major, but this structure belongs to the group of circular temples that may be dated as early as the 12th century. The base is nearly always the most reliable clue of stylistic phase, with the *adhisthāna* here showing a *jagatī* as vertical moulding above the *upāna* as lowermost element, *tripaṭṭa-kumuda* or trifaceted form of the most important moulding, *kantha* recess, and *kapota* "pigeon" as crowning member. Above these, a typical *vedi* or railing member intervenes before the *bhitti* proper. The last part is unfinished, thus suggestive of renovation of the original structure. Inscriptions are found at the *kumuda* level in Vātteluttu characters, and a separate slab inscription also exists. [203] More memorable than any of the above features, however, is the visage of Subrahmanya himself. From a dark body that is obscured by flower garlands, and in the dim light provided by a hanging lamp and a 3-armed pedestal light, the face of the god looks out at the visitor from its nearby vantage point. It is brightly painted with yellow sandalwood paste and with black paint defining brows, eyes, and dimpled mouth. The face is precisely that of a Kathakāli actor. And the god smiles.

Srī Mahādeva: Masterwork of Ettumanur (Kottayam District)

One of the very most significant monuments in all of Kerala, and a key example of the full development of art in wood, is the famous temple of Śiva at Ettumanur. With a four-year renovation project completed by Kollam 720 (1545 A.D.), according to inscription,[204] the building is another that is marked by columns in the processional path surrounding the *sanctum,* with 12 around a square *garbha gṛha* that is of miniature Drāviḍa-*vimāna* type with octagonal śikhara tower inside of its circular *srikovil* enclosure. And like other temples of this exterior plan, it displays the most impressive arts at roof and wall levels. These include paintings, and a "stupendous" panel of Siva Natarāja on the *gopura* inner wall, measuring 12 feet by 8 feet, is considered to be a landmark in the history of Kerala painting. The god is shown trampling the demon Apasmara or Musalangam who had been produced from fire by certain sages opposed to Śiva. Attributed to the 16th century by R.V. Poduval, with an inscription at its base dated Kollam Era

PLATES 134, 135

PLATE 136

717 (1542 A.D.), the painting belongs to a time of the growth of Kathākali theatre as well as the rebirth of the Bhakti movement.[205] Soundara Rajan dates the temple's development from the 12th to the 17th century by inscriptional evidence.[206] A later record, attached to the *dhvaja-stambha,* is of 1888 A.D.

As has been noted, Ettumanur's temple is nearly as large as the circular structure of Peruntirukoyil at Udayamperur in Ernakulam District, and it is built according to the requirements of similar texts, presumably including the *Tantrasamuchchaya* of Nārāyana, who was born in 1426 A.D. H. Sarkar describes the structural complex as "well-knit" despite its extensive area. The *srikovil* itself is one storey high and sheltered by a timber roof with copper plate covering and copper-gilt *stūpi,* It contains a *liṅga* on stone *piṭha,* and it faces west.

Copper roofing belongs to the *namaskāra-maṇdapa* and *nālambalam* cloister as well as to the *srikovil,* with the first of these being a very ornate structure with two copper images of Nandi inside. [207] There is only one subsidiary shrine, which belongs to Sāstā, on the south side of the main building. More unusual are at least two wooden columns of the *namaskāra mandapa* that are said to be divine manifestations, with those of the northeast and northwest directions being separately housed in wooden enclosures and worshipped as Yakṣī and Bhagavatī respectively.[208] Legend has it that the setting was once the jungle of Harinapuram and that the Śiva-*liṅga* consecrated here by Khara lay hidden in the forest for centuries before it was installed at the present site by Vilvamangalam Swamiar. At first the god was feared, but he was appeased by erection of a Kṛṣna shrine nearby in 1285 A.D. Attendant deities today are Bhagavatī, Śāstā, Ganapati, Daksinamūrti, and Yaksī.[209] Śiva himself is said to like to receive silver and gold at Ettumanur while at Vaikom he prefers to have Brāhmans fed. Worship here conquers incurable illness and removes the influence of evil spirits. [210]

Popular belief is that a princess of the Zamorin's family, Madhari by name, was cured of an ulcer at this temple and thereafter gave a large grant to support daily *pūjā* there. The Madhavalli *Pūjā* still goes on. The land of the temple was confiscated by Mārtāṇḍa Varma of Travancore in the 18th century when he annexed the principality, and this act is said to have brought misery upon his family. In Kollam Era 964 (1789 A.D.) his successor Dharma Rāja (1758–1798) offered gold in atonement. In addition, a bronze figure of Nandi filled with rice paddy and kept in the *maṇdapa* is noted for having been presented by Champakasseri Rāja after he was cured of a chronic stomach ache by the god of Ettumanur. Soot from the upper part of an oil lamp at the entrance is much in demand for curing eye diseases. [211]

Ettumanur stands apart from the rest of Indian temple architecture in many respects. The temple is essentially restricted and closed, but its interior buildings can be glimpsed over the low *prākāra* wall; it is spacious with numerous "extra" structures, such as an *anākkottil* elephant house between the flagstaff and *gopura,* but

it is not a labyrinth; it bears ornamental additions but its underlying form is not obscured; it is complicated but it is not overwhelming. Human scale is maintained along with general approachability of the *sanctum*. This openness belies the great wealth of the temple, indicated by the fact that it contains eight gold elephants, one of which is 1 foot high while the rest are 3 feet high. They were offered by Mahārāja Rāma Varma after his victory over Tīpu Sultan, and they are carried in procession on the eighth through tenth days of the temple's annual festival in the month of Kumbhom (February/March).[212] Its exterior wall surrounds the temple with countless oil lamps in wooden frames covered with metal trellis work. Pyramid contrasts cone as the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* is seen next to the *srikovil.* The circular building has wooden walls that rise from a granite *adhisthāna* of *kapota-bandha* type. Its individual parts are *upāna, jagatī,* octagonal *kumunda, kaṇṭha* with *kampa* and *gala-pāda* parts, *valabhi,* plain *kapota,* and *prati.*[213] Over this is a *vedika* that is topped by an animal procession carved on a wooden frieze. Above this is a wall filled with wooden *jālakas* or screens that hold many niches that are filled with images and underlain by animal processions. Pilasters above are also made of wood. Most prominent are male and female deities who encircle the building in the form of about 20 especially large bracket figures. They lean forward from the porous walls with their feet braced against half-figure elephants, *gajamundas.* Their gestures and facial expressions are of all kinds as they are set off by a background matrix of minutely cut screens and niches. Also expressive are four pairs of wooden guardians that flank the entries of the building. The largest of these are at the main door, familiar in their ferocity.

PLATE 137

PLATE 138

The temple of *sarvatobhadra* type with four doors has three *sopāna* stairways. The entries correspond to repeated openings of a second, interior wall of joined columns that is also circular, and with openings in the *garbha gṛha* itself. Therefore, the plan is like that of *chaturmukha* shrines of the Jaina tradition, and it also calls for intriguing comparison to Śri Lanka Buddhist traditions, especially that of *dāgaba* mounds that were covered by columned, wooden roofs. This latter question is needs careful investigation. The center *liṅga* can be viewed through openings at all four directions.

PLATE 139

The northern door is the only one that lacks a stairway, but this is to allow for the projection of a *pranāla* drain, this one emerging from a lion's mouth. Its *go-mukha* terminal end rests on the head of a seated dwarf that is shown blowing a conch shell. The eastern entry has the most elaborate balustrade, with two lateral stairways and high relief carvings of female dancers that are accompanied by a cymbal-bearer and a drummer.

Low relief and pierced sculpture made of wood on the temple walls is the equivalent of Kerala mural painting at its best. Shadows are deep enough to create the illusion of space and frequent use of diagonals enlivens the compositions. Above all, the carvings are "polished" in every sense. Jewelry, vegetation, and various linear accents are cut rather than painted, but their effect of both

PLATES 140, 141

containing and releasing form is the same as in painting. A three-dimensional dancing Śiva is as free in a wooden niche on the wall as in the famous mural inside the *gopura*. The whole of the *Ramāyana* is carved around the central shrine, alongwith seenes from the *Santanagopala, Krsna Līla,* and *Bhagavata Purāna*, all dating from around the 16th century in their manufacture.[214] Larger and more abstract panels, measuring about 5 feet square, are subdivided into 25 sub-squares, all filled by geometric cross-hatching and lotus medallions. Within them, human and superhuman subjects project as expanded composite volumes with tight and constricted, yet liberating outlines. With Sītā at his left and Hanumant on the floor before him as devotee, Rāma is shown at the time of his coronation wearing necklaces, shoulder plates, shoulder rings, an ornamental belt *(udara bandham)*, bracelet *(kankanam)*, girdle *(katibandham)*, conical cap *(kiritamukuta)*, etc. In the Kerala manner, the bound forms are passively forceful.

A subject that appears again in the emphatic brackets of Ettumanur is a Rishi or saint who kicks one leg as high as his bearded face. Durgā rides triumphant on her lion; elephants and lions do battle; Śiva stands with Pārvatī; Rāma draws his bow; rotund dwarf attendants encircle the cornice; gods occupy a circle of lotus petals. Around and among such subjects hundreds of tiny characters, both beautiful and ugly, march and dance and cavort and fight. From the double gable of its *gopura* to the shimmering texture of the lush ceiling in the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* to the uninterrupted crescendo of the conical roof, this landmark of Śiva stands for the power and the refinement of Kerala temple art. Those elements that may be termed borrowings—stone columns of the cloister, *adhiṣṭhāna* order, floor plan orientation, interior *vimāna* form—are parts of a truly Kerala whole. Managed by the central government since 1812, this memorable monument concludes a selective survey of the central region.

PLATE 142

PLATES 143, 144

Chapter Thirteen

Techniques of the Mural Tradition

Before going further south to complete a geographical progression through the art of Kerala temples, it is useful to pause for a more detailed investigation of mural painting, especially in the terms of technique. Several mural complexes of great importance have been summarily dealt with as palace and temple design has been approached from many directions. Yet it has been stated that the Indian conception of the "painted temple" survives today only on the Malabar Coast, and more care should be taken. Very little comparison has been made between Kerala painting and that of other cultures, with technique and materials barely touched in preceding sections. In Kerala, scientific analysis has been applied in comparative ways to wall painting, even if aesthetic judgements have been avoided. Something of the way of the artist is investigated below.

Study of Kerala murals in palaces and on the *srikovil* and *nālambalam* as well as *gopura* walls is somewhat hampered by the simple fact that the paintings are still *in situ,* attached to the buildings and caves that they were made for. The earliest are largely lost, although such recent finds as that already mentioned in Maraiyur throw light on possible Mesolithic beginnings of painting in Kerala. Buddhist, Jaina, and Hindu murals of the formative years for these faiths are mostly crumbled and fallen today, lacking dual stratification with organic material, tools, trade goods, or other objects that might provide relative if not absolute dates for the works. Inscriptions are rarely found on painted walls, and no artist signs his name. Yet even on the basis of extremely fragmentary finds, like those at the cave temple of Tirunandikara in Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu, judgements have been made that seek to relate Malabar and Travancore paintings to traditions of the Cholas, Pāndyas, Hoysalas, and other great southern powers. Specific comparison has also been made to Ajanta, as a kind of aesthetic yardstick by which it is sometimes assumed that all other painting in India must be measured.

PLATE 145

Methods change from the early to later periods of mural painting in terms of wall preparation, color, and bindings. And technique is never exactly the same as at Ajanta or other famous sites outside of Kerala. There is some decline of quality in later works, and older paintings prove to be less soluble in water, perhaps because of their better binding material, while even oil and methylated spirit do not remove some early paintings. The works are not true frescoes but paintings applied to dry plaster walls in the *secco* manner. The most remarkable feature of their technique involves color.

PLATE 146

Jayantilal T. Parekh describes the preparation of wall surfaces for palace and temple paintings step by step, according to classical texts, as follows. [215] On an underlying wall surface of laterite [rarely, granite] plaster made of lime and sand is spread. The method of coating the walls, called *sudhalepa,* employs *chunam (sudha)* as a powder that is made by burning conch, mother-of-pearl, or other shell. The powder is mixed with a solution of molasses and a decoction of one-fourth the same quantity of small peas *(mudga).* One-fourth part of sand mixed with unripe plantain fruit, boiled and beaten into fine pulp, is added. The mixture is placed into wooden dug-out vessels and stored for two months, being mixed daily. After this period, the substance is ground in small amounts on a granite slab after being sprinkled with molasses. A butter-like paste results. It may then be applied to the wall, with care taken to "level the plaster by means of a trowel of convenient size, made of copper, pewter, iron or wood. Care should be taken that the surface does nowhere protrude or fall in. When levelling is over the surface should be rubbed with cold water by means of the trunk brush. Whitewash the surface when it gets dry."[216] Without admixture of jute or hemp, the plaster surface has been noted to be less tenacious in Cochin than beyond Kerala, according to P. Anujan Achan, resulting in greater deterioration.

The texts are ideals that are not always exactly followed, as Parekh indicates when noting that some existing plaster surfaces often do not seem to have had the above grinding step utilized in their manufacture. He describes the plaster coating as varying in thickness from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, with one or more thin layers of lime over it, although some paintings are applied directly to the plaster itself. [217]

The carrier surface should be rough in order to contribute to the firmness of the plaster. Hard and compact stone walls lessen chances of salt efflorescence in murals. Likewise, lime and silica contribute to the consolidation of plaster which is then smoothed with lime wash as the ground for painting. In an exhaustive study, S. Paramasivan examined micro-sections of the different layers of painted stucco, and he determined two lines of cleavage or junction below painted surfaces, due to the presence of three distinct layers. The first division is between a layer of paint and a thin white layer. The second and more cohesive junction is between the white layer and underlying rough plaster layer. Thickness of the layers varies from place to place, with parts of the Mattancheri and Padmanābhapuram palaces having unusually thin rough plaster, but thick paint that lacks "delicacy," and the composition of rough plaster varies considerably in its make-up of Silica, Lime, Iron and Alumina, Magnesia, Sulphuric anhydride, and other components. Variation from 28.98% Silica at Tirunandikara temple to 62.46% at Padmanābhapuram reveals the latitude that existed for artists and craftsmen in preparing walls for painting.

Contributing to the survival of murals are the low percentage of impurities such as alkalies and other soluble salts, the fine gloss of lime wash, firm adherence of plaster to walls, and the absence of slaking on the fresco ground that indicates

special care taken in the selection or preparation of lime. At all sites, only sand was used as inert material.[218] Lime wash is so firmly bound to rough plaster in some examples as to suggest that it was added while the plaster was still wet. Its fine gloss results from trowelling of the surface. [219]

Early paintings like those referred to at Tirunandikara employ such pigments as Cadmium sulphide for yellow, called Menewala in Malabar, Mercuric sulphide or Red Vermilion which is called Chaeliyam, green, indigo, black and white. Finely ground and mixed with coconut water and a binder made of *Abrus precatorius* seeds, the pigments are long-lasting. [220] The red and yellow pigments are replaced in later works by duller red and yellow ochres, and binding came to be accomplished with gum arabic or other materials that are not as effective as the seed paste. Pigments come to be more easily removed from the walls. Blue and indigo are never frequent colors, but yellowish green and bluish green are common hues, often establishing the color scheme of entire walls.

Black is employed to define Kerala paintings and for the illusion of volume. It is made by mixing alum with water and letting the liquid stand overnight with a piece of rusting iron and a piece of Hartaki *(Terminalia chebula)* in it. Black is not used for preliminary outlines, as has been noted. Instead, a light yellow to reddish drawing is put down freely and sketchily, incorporating changes and corrections. Over this a final red drawing is made, as in Śrī Lanka, and flat colors are put down in the prescribed areas of pattern. Forms are then shaded and made round by stippling marks that are themselves quite precise and clear. Yellow is shaded with red, green with black, etc. Stippling gives way to actual shading after European, Mughal, and Rajput contact. The red line is covered with black outlines that define final patterns. If additional white spaces are needed beyond those areas of plastered wall that were not painted, they are simply scratched from under the paint. White is not generally used as a color (Vaikom is an exception). There is no proof that varnish or fixatif was applied over traditional works.[221] The smoke of oil lamps darkens murals, while light and exposure to the elements often fades them.

PLATE 147

As a brief comparison to traditions outside, it may be useful to refer to Chola Dynasty murals in the Bṛhadīśvara temple at Tanjore from the period of Rājarāja I (985-1014 A. D.), a time of much interaction between Kerala and Tamil country. Technique again involves *stuccoduro* surfaces prepared by putting a smooth coat of lime plaster over a rougher layer that is first laid on a stone wall, and the painted surface is smooth and glossy. But no binding medium is used in preparing the ground or putting down pigments. Pigments are interfaced and spread beneath the wet stucco surface as in the true fresco method, although Pallava and early Pāṇḍya paintings had been fresco *secco,* and this last point separates the Tanjore works from their contemporary Kerala counterparts. [222]

Some indication of historical change can be measured by micrometer statistics, by pigment changes, and by degrees of outside influence, especially

PLATE 148

from northern India and from Europe. Late paintings are hazed in *sfumato* and *chiaroscuro* effects that leave behind the crystalline clarity of classical murals, and works sometimes seek to be naturalistic rather than realistic. The famous easel painter, Rāja Ravi Varma may be said to conclude the development of Kerala art with his imported oil technique and fool-the-eye cleverness, but at the same time it must be recognized that the Kerala coast has one of India's longest traditions of contact with the outside world. In a very real sense, the art of the region has always been international and local at the same time. Therefore, both Rāja Ravi Varma and Madhava Menon, with his poetic landscape and life studies of birds and animals in styles that are strongly affected by Far Eastern painting, are at home in Kerala.

Mural painting of the south coast must be seen in person to be truly felt, not only because of its grand scale but because of the succulence of its colors and the vibrancy of its active compositions. This, too, is theatrical art in the broadest sense, absorbing the viewer into its realm. As reproductions are examined here, it is helpful to keep in mind the admonition of S. Sanjiva Dev: "to judge a painting by its halftone reproduction is analogous to judge the beauty of a person by his shadow." [223]

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Southern Kerala Temples

ALLEPPEY, QUILON, AND Trivandrum Districts along with some sites in what is now Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu State take Kerala temple art to its southernmost expressions. The areas formerly known as Travancore had nearly 10,000 temples and 15,000 other places of worship, such as serpent groves in 1906,[224] and the above districts hold great monuments that continue the full expression of Kerala inventiveness, as well as others that are impressive for their pure statement of southwestern and interior patterns.

A. Alleppey District

Wood Gables, Gods, and Srī Mahādeva in Kaviyur (Alleppey District)

Alleppey is one of the most lush districts in Kerala, with a very extensive backwater network, rice fields, and forested hills. It is home of Kṛṣṇapuram palace, discussed above, and several temples that deserve to put Alleppey on any map of world monuments. Just as scale remains humble, quality remains outstanding. This is especially true of art in wood, the material that has attracted most attention in this survey. Kaviyur is the rural setting for Srī Mahādeva, and the temple itself is small and self-contained like a village, therefore closely tied to all monuments studied here. It consists of a family of structures with both practical and religious functions inside the usual *prākāra* boundaries.

PLATES 149, 150

The buildings are mainly aligned on the east-west axis, with each freestanding structure meant to be circumambulated in clockwise direction. The *praṇāla* drain of the *srikovil* leads across the paved inner court to the cloister walls, and the interior of the shrine from which it flows is visually accessible, with its enshrined *liṅga* on *yoni* base. It is a circular temple with eight columns inside a *sandhara* ambulatory, and its *garbha gṛha* is round on the exterior but encloses a square room. A *namaskāra maṇḍapa* stands before its eastern entrance, and there is a second opening in the western side of the wall. None of these features is remarkable.

What makes the Kaviyur temple worthy of mention, query, study, and appreciation? Along with all of the topical yet undefinable features such as horizontal and *pradakṣina* movement as pathway toward truth, the radiation of beauty and goodness from the circular plan, and the awesome impact of sanctified ground apart from a very nearby world, there is the graspable beauty of excellent woodcarving. Again, carvings are individually important and collectively extraordinary. Dating from 17th century renovation, they are not very old, but they are

PLATE 151

timeless in meaning. Some are expressive and explosive, like *kīrttimukha* monster masks, while others are calmly embracing footnotes of form. All are approached by one of the most impressive entryways in Kerala.

PLATE 152 PLATE 153

A very wide stairway with 20 stone steps leads visitors to a *gopura* with two roofs and triangular gable. Within this outer porch is the entrance to a deep *agra maṇḍapa* that telescopes inward as a very open wooden structure on tall wooden columns with exposed underroof beams beneath the peaked covering. This preliminary porch space is empty except for a small offering box. At the end of the rectangle may be glimpsed the base of a tall *dhvaja-stambha.* This blessed column, with its capital supporting a small figure of Nandi that faces the inner temple and its cloister, is an element that is most frequent in southern Kerala.

Between two *prākāras* there is a spacious circumambulatory, partly paved for daily processions and the ambulant prayers of devotees. This affords an overall view of the especially rhythmic assemblage of cloister and vestibule buildings. Wall surfaces are punctuated by oil lamps at the cloister level and by slatted screens at the level of the upper roof support. Balance between horizontal roof ridge line and the angle of sloping roofs, covered with abundant copper, is especially perfect here, providing an overall impression of great stability. There are several openings in the cloister but its main doorway, that toward the east, is fittingly grand. It consists of two gables, large above small, that are rounded at their peaks in contrast to the sharp angles that are all around them. There are some metal additions to their wooden parts, including a *Kāla* mask at the top of the upper gable and a lotus medallion in the same part of the lower one. Both levels are carved within, with the upper gable having an outstanding scheme that is very complex in its subtle shadowing. It brings this survey back to the remarks of J.H. Cousins on the special genius of Kerala design. [225] Once again, the temptation is overcome to treat the triangular matrix in terms of three figures, and those vertical elements that are necessary for support are recessed so as to become part of the sculptural backdrop. Like the curtain of a proscenium stage, rippling curves of vine vegetation and suspended volutes cross the composition or assemblage. Behind these, the wall inside of the gable holds a miniature shrine facade with false doors and miniature *dvārapālas.* Below this a base border of lotus petals is found which rests in turn on a row of lions and elephants. A rectilinear moulding is the lowermost element. The carving as a whole is a shadowed *bas-relief* that is formal and elegant, and suited to lead visitors into the inner court. It has a surface of which Louise Nevelson might be proud, because of its textural harmony like that of her own 20th century sculpture in wood.

PLATE 154 FIGURE 25

Beyond functional platforms and covered cloister passage, the inner courtyard is dominated by a copper-covered *srikovil* with similarly protected *namaskāra maṇḍapa.* The central building is perfectly round, measuring about 52 feet in diameter, and six steps lead to the top of the *adhiṣṭhāna,* with four more rising to the interior of the *garbha gṛha* with its *liṅga.* A *praṇāla* of *go-mukha* (cow's mouth)

end empties into the north side of the court. The outer porches are square in plan, with deeply cut ceiling patterns. The outer porch has some of the most detailed sculptures in all of Kerala, with nearly all miniature brackets made up of figural pairs, such as Hanumant with Rāma, that are communicating groups rather than mere aligned mannikins. A ceiling frieze below the brackets recall Cambodian sculpture like that at Banteay Srei in its shadowed action and lushness. Four cornice borders rise above the brackets, filled with floral patterns. The nine ceiling panels usually given to the *nava-graha,* however, are blank. Lowermost of the congruent borders is that of fully round and wide-eyed *nāga* kings that are part of the underside of the *gopura* roof.

PLATE 155

Nine directional figures are found in rounded panels in the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* ceiling, placed in an unusual fashion so that none of their bases faces outward. A goddess in the center replaces the normal image of Brahmā, and her figure is like a textbook illustration of the best of volume and cut line in Kerala sculpture. Remarkably beautiful are the rippling patterns of her garments, especially the flowing sash that descends from her waist to cover her feet, along with the extravagant repetition of jewels in her crown and necklace. Below the nine medallions of the ceiling another cornice frieze is found. This one includes a fine miniature version of Viṣṇu Anantaśayin at rest on his cosmic ocean, with Brahmā born upon the lotus flower that grows from his navel, and a row of devotees behind him. All of these images are but prelude to the crowd of iconography that covers the *srikovil* walls beyond.

PLATE 156

Kaviyur's monument to Śiva belongs to the Early Phase of temple art in its *adhiṣṭhāna* that bears inscriptions with Kali Era dates 4051 and 4052 (950 and 951 A.D.). The mouldings of this early base are *upāna, jagatī,* octagonal *kumuda,* deeply recessed *kaṇṭha* with *gala-pādas* between the *kampas, uttara, valabhī*, and *kapota.*[226] The structure above the base is presumably much changed since the temple was founded, with the wooden wall at the outside probably only about two centuries old.[227] Age is not the point, however, for this wall is one of the great works of Kerala art. Kaviyur Śiva may, in fact, be taken together with Śrī Mahādeva at Ettumanur in Kottayam District and Pulliyur Narasiṁha in Chengannur of Alleppey District to represent the greatest wooden monuments in South India.

PLATE 157

In terms of the combination of texture and iconography, the walls at Kaviyur surpass the quality of temple and secular architecture in Gujarat, mosque and mausoleum surfaces in Kashmir, and temple cornices of Nepal as major selected masterworks in wood. While the nearby rock-cut Śiva temple of Kaviyur supports Pallava and Pāṇḍya comparisons as it indicates the beginnings of temple art,[228] this building represents the full flower of that art. With four doors, the temple is of *sarvatobhadra* category, but with such modifications as circular outer plan evolving to a square interior room. It is typical in that its carvings exhibit no sectarian bias as they treat both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava themes, with special emphasis upon Purānic legends and the *Rāmāyaṇa* in association with the revised Bhakti movement of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The kind of carving that Tamil Nadu lavished upon temple chariots is given to temple walls in Kerala, while sacred carts of the region took the form of high, fairly plain towers at least three "storeys" high, and sometimes with as many as 13 roofs that had proportions surprisingly like those of Nepalese temples.[229] H. Sarkar suggests that the Hoyśala tradition of carving in soft chlorite schist was possible inspiration for Kerala carving, and emphasizes the fact that in Kerala, realistic forms have little relationship to the original shape of the wooden material.[230] Such disguise is, of course, true of many civilizations, and it is perhaps more significant that there is a clear interrelationship among the arts of woodcarving, painting, and sculpture in metal and stone as well as in stucco. Very useful is comparison of the lace-like sculptural style of the Hoyśalas to that of Kerala, for the connection is born out by political happenings during the Middle Phase of temple art.

When carvings are applied to entire walls they are normally placed in three registers, with vertical and horizontal boundary lines that are marked by various floral and scroll designs, including open blooms and vines. And fairly large niches, *deva-koṣṭhas,* may hold deities as at the temple of Śrī Mahādeva at Ettumanur. *Dvārapālas* may be just as large and theatrical in wood as they are in the more usual stone material. All of these elements exist at Kaviyur, and a few examples are included here.

All four doors on the Śiva monument have wooden guardians that project far from the wall, being freed by undercutting of their arms and legs. They are as grotesque and exaggerated as any images in Kerala art, and they are unavoidable statements, obvious and striking. An opposite extreme is found in the understatement of pierced *jyāli* screens with square panels that alternate between showing simple lotus/wheel circles and plain crosshatch squares. Only square medallions, where the panel frames cross each other, have more specific meaning, although these are simply of lions and elephants. In only some of the screens does framework take on architectural or vegetal designs of some elaboration. And large compound screens are separated from each other by columns that have many carved registers and frame-like borders of flower garlands. Most important are those panels that are sometimes found at the sides of the pierced screens and sometimes in their centers to show gods and sacred stories.

PLATE 158

A small panel at Kaviyur shows the frightful Narasiṃha in yogic posture with *patta* band at his knees to aid quiet concentration, in a frontal and angular composition, which another carving is all flowing curves as it shows naughty Kṛṣṇa climbing a tree with clothes that he has stolen from the *gopi* women below. One vertical plank is divided into four horizontal scenes, one above the other, to narrate the birth of Kṛṣṇa with its mother in joyous labor, the baby with his father Vasudeva, Kṛṣṇa as a youth reclining in the pose of Viṣṇu, and a family scene with the divine child. Nearby, Rāma communes with Hanumant who stands below the god with hands raised in respect and awe. In another compound panel Arjuna does battle with a Kirāta as, below, Arjuna is shown in penance while

PLATE 159

PLATES 160, 161

PLATE 162

Kṛṣṇa comes with a weapon,. Varāhi rides upon a lion, Kṛṣṇa plays his flute, Śāstā rides his gallant steed, Rāma hunts, and the monkey army readies for battle, while gods receive showers of gold. Stories are exact, emotional, dignified, graceful. Outstanding among them is a scene of Gajendramoksa subject, deemed by R.P. Nair a "treasure" of woodcarver's art. [231] Above all, they are convincing.

A Golden Garuda and the Temple of Śrī Vallabha at Tiruvalla (Alleppey District).

The temple at Tiruvalla near Kaviyur illustrates once more the potential for invention that always exists in Kerala. It has a building unlike any other in the state, and a column sculpture of great importance. Located 18 miles south of Kottayam, the temple was built in the 13th century, according to inscription (*Travancore Archaeological Series,* Vol. III, pp.196–197), at a time when southern stone carving was much affected by Vijayanagar and Pāṇḍya patronage and influence, as revealed here in wall pilasters, columns with female figures, and corbels. There is a pattern of worshipping *sudarśana* images as separate divine figures on the outer circuit of the main temple, in this case on the west side, as another 12th or 13th century pattern from interior India. [232]

PLATE 163

The lower *srikovil* storey is made entirely of stone with pilasters and miniature *pañjara* shrines on its walls and it has a *sāndhāra* interior. A standing image of Viṣṇu rests inside, made of pure gold. [233] It is said to have been installed in the year 59 B.C, on the 1,111,526th day of the Kali Age. [234] Beside it there are five images that are made of *pañchaloha* alloy of five metals (gold, silver, tin, lead, and copper) and there were at one time 101 gold pots as well, but all of these were stolen. There was a *kūttambalam* located south of the temple flagstaff but it collapsed in the 19th century. When its foundation was excavated in this century, a granite cellar with granite lid was found. It contained a small elephant of five-metal alloy. A golden elephant, with ruby eyes, was also reported to be under the theatre of Haripad temple during reconstruction following a recent fire. [235]

PLATE 164

A circular *vimāna* is preceded by a *mukha maṇḍapa* with roof that continues from a *namaskāra maṇḍapa* that shows five stone columns and wooden columns used together, but no important woodcarvings. *Dvārapālas* are lacking, although four doors mark the cardinal directions of the temple. A small shrine of Viṣṇu Viśvakṣena is found at the northeast corner of the inner court, facing south toward the main building with its single copper roof.

Dakṣiṇamūrti and Śiva Yogiśvara accompanied by ascetics are carved on either side of a balustrade at the *srikovil* entry. They are perhaps a later addition to the Viṣṇu monument. [236] Less unusual is the *praṇāla* drain, but it is quite ornate and supported by a standing *yakṣa* as male fertility figure with a stone receptacle for *abhiśeka* water before him.

Successive buildings are well integrated at Tiruvalla, including cloister, sub-shrine, *namaskāra maṇḍapa,* outer gateway at the end of a long approach, and an *agru maṇḍapa* as preliminary porch. But the most remarkable feature of the spacious complex is a unique *gopuradvāra* structure that is built around a very tall

PLATE 165
FIGURE 27

column made of granite, atop which rests a golden image of Garuḍa as attendant to Viṣṇu. To his right, a golden flagstaff provides another element of luxurious symbolism. The structure has three roofs but they are marked by many extensions and projecting gables so that the building as a whole appears very complicated, and as dramatically vertical as any "pagoda" in Asian art. This is the Tiruvalla monument that is most often published. Its scale, nevertheless, is small and its interior space is negligible. It is preceded by an open outer porch and a proper gatehouse, and it is followed by a double-roofed entry house that extends from the walls of the cloister. None of these has the surprising history of the Garuda building. The Garuḍa sculpture honors the dream of Viṣṇu's *vahāna* as it rests on a column of black granite that is about 50 feet high and 2 feet in diameter. The image is made of the five metals previously mentioned and it is always bright, standing about 3 feet tall. It is suggested that the bottom of the column may touch water as lightning guard. It must be admitted that the three storeyed "minaret" built around it does obscure this most impressive stone axis in Kerala.[237] Finally, an unusual but not unique custom of the temple is that women may not enter it except at two festival times of the year.[238]

Trikkoratti Temple (Alleppey District) and its Hidden Focus

Screen walls of wood surround the small and little-known temple of Śiva at Trikkoratti, with each panel holding a large and brightly painted figure of deities such as Śiva Natarāja, Krsna with flute, destructive Durgā, and others. Its court is large, its *namaskāra maṇḍapa* ceiling is much embellished, and its deity is singular in form. A dark stone *liṅga* of Siva, standing about 2½ feet tall, is present at the centre of the *garbha gṛha* as most holy symbol. But it is viewed only when a screen of gold (or polished bronze), bearing the face of the god, is lifted. It is a rare example of a rather secretive image or symbol, comparable to the cloth-covered focus of Kadampuzha in Malappuram District.

Pulliyur Narasimha and Wood at Chengannur (Alleppey District)

PLATES 166, 167

Pulliyur Narasiṃha temple, also known as Sāttankuḷaṅkarai Narasiṃha, is a monument of great significance in the history of art in Kerala and South Asia as a whole. It is found at Chengannur in the Taluk of the same name, 35 miles south of Kottayam near the banks of the river Pamba. It is noted for an important inscriptional record, the Māmpaḷḷi plate of Kollam 149 (974 A.D.) that records a land grant during the reign of Srī Vallabhaṉ Kodai who was evidently succeeded by Govardhana Māṭṭaṇḍan, the ruler associated with the famous Jewish copper-plate of 1000 A.D.[239] Its connection to exterior arts is proven by the lotus bud termination of a *praṇāla,* a southern element that is also noted at Suchindram temple. And because of numerous other shrines in the area such as Kunnathumalai Śiva,[240] Chengannur is known to have been an important and early religious center, and the earliest dated inscription that is attached to a building belongs to Kollam 663 (1465 A.D.). A recent addition is a new gateway of which the Chief Engineer, Trivandrum, wrote: "The superstructure of the Gopuram

looks more a dignified inspection bungalow than a part of a temple structure that it is meant to be. It is such hideous combinations which have to be guarded against in making renovations of temples." [241]

The temple of Narasiṃha has an inscription honoring Devaṉ Śaṅkaraṉ of Melkkādu as repairer of the building, and partial donor of funds for feeding devotees on days of *pūjā*. It is attributed on palaeographical grounds to the 14th century (*Travancore Archaeological Series,* IV; pp. 161–166). [242] The building faces west, with its plan of *sama-chaturāśra kṣudra-vimāna* variety, square from base to top, [243] and there is nothing simple about it because of the wooden additions to its surface. The *srikovil* proportions are small, like those of the tiled *namaskāra-maṇḍapa* before it, having a fairly plain granite base, with lotus petal *upāna* and roll-cornice upper moulding of the *prastara.* Above this as lowest band of the wooden wall is a row of lions, the *siṁha-mālā.* Four functional doorways face the normal directions, each with a pair of life-size guardians made of wood. Measuring 21 feet square and enclosing an inner room that is 9 feet square, the *srikovil* has four columns in its *sandhara* space, one placed just outside of each corner of the *garbha gṛha.* From the north side projects a *pranāla* as fluted *sundu,* named for the trunk of an elephant, with three ornamental bands. It emerges from a *simha* (lion) mouth and is supported at the *go-mukha* by a *bhūta* standing below. Usually ornate is the *prastara* as entablature over the wall. Its *valabhī* moulding is carved with a scene of *samudra-mathana* (Churning the Sea of Milk) and more scenes from the *Purānas.* [244] And the *kapota* is equally detailed, with multiple nāsikā window niches. Fluidity is extreme in decorations and narrative forms that are elegant of line and form. Restraint is minimal, yet clear vertical and horizontal divisions contain the designs. Chengannur itself is a major center of granite carving in Kerala and this is reflected even in the wooden arts.

FIGURE

PLATE 168

PLATE 169

PLATE 170

A zenith is reached in the development of woodcarving at Chengannur, with pictorial exuberance equal to that of fully evolved wall painting. Horizontal registers again organize entire wall surface covered with functional screening and sacred story. The north wall with its *praṇāla* shows Kṛṣṇa playing his flute in a *deva-koṣṭha* frame along with other deities amid incredible decorative embellishments. The eastern side has on its northern half the story of *setu-bandhana,* building a bridge to Laṅkā for invasion and defeat of the evil Rāvana. This part of the wall also shows Kṛṣṇa destroying the demon Dhenukāsura. The wooden *dvārapālas* at every door are extravagantly emotive, with poses that are especially fluid and faces that are more human than monstrous. Just south of the eastern door is a niche that honors a wooden figure of Gaṇeśa, and the southern part of the wall also holds a panel that is arranged in five vertical registers to show the 10 incarnations, Daśāvatāra, of Viṣṇu. Among other representations on the temple are Viṣṇu Anantaśayin and a remarkable panel with vertical composition of Viṣṇu riding on Garuḍa above the twisting forms of an elephant and a crocodile amid aquatic

PLATE 171

PLATE 172

foliage. *Jālaka* screens cut with unusually tiny and precise openings occupy most of the panel surfaces, with figurative panels at their edges.

Śaivite scenes dominate panels of the southern wall, including that of Śiva with Pārvatī seated in glory within a marvelous niche with *makaras,* leaves, Face of Glory, and lively monkeys sporting overhead. In vertically arranged panels, Ganeśa swells within his rectangular frame while Subrahmaṇya astride his peacock calmly dangles one foot over his brother Ganeśa below him. And Śiva is shown in his classic Naṭarāja pose of fiery dance. Three scenes in the second panel from the east represent Sitā's sojourn in the forest, her long hair shrouding her body as she sits beneath an explosively lush tree, with Hanumant coming before her. Nearby is a *deva-koṣṭha* that shows Kṛṣṇa in the rare pose of sucking milk directly from the teat of a cow's udder as he holds the animal above his head. A door niche on either side of this is covered at the lintel by the *lalāta-bimba* scene of Śiva and Pārvatī that is mentioned above. On the west side of the wall are three windows, the central one carved with a *pūrṇa-ghaṭa* of corn. In the center of this section the *deva-koṣṭha* presents a *yakṣī* below a tree.

PLATES 174, PLATE 173, 175

PLATE 176

West is the direction that the *srikovil* faces, and this side is marked by scenes from the *Kṛṣṇa-Līla,* as appropriate to the Viṣṇu monument. Three registers treat the Kirātārjuniya story, and another vertical panel shows scenes from *Pūtanā-vadha* as Kṛṣṇa kills the elephant, the cannibal Baka and the serpent Kaliya.[245] The aforementioned relief of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa is found here, the god having eight arms and favoring the king of elephants, Gajendra-anugrahamūrti. A major niche carving represents Narasimha tearing out the entrails of Hiranya, and the main deity is again shown in a *deva-koṣṭha* image having the pose of *yogāsana.* This carving is a kind of summary design, for it brings together the utter balance of the ferocious god, two arms at his sides and two arms gently raised, knees banded for concentration, with the baroque vitality of the niche itself. The frame bursts from the wall with trailing creepers, leaping devotees, grimacing lions, and miniature architectural parts that melt into flame-like animal and vegetal extrusions. Chengannur destroys the argument of those who would term Kerala architecture simple or understated in comparison to other Indian traditions.

PLATE 177

Kūttambalam Design— The Temple Theatre as Major Monument

It is not fair to emphasize temple carving so much as in the preceding pages without mentioning that temple theatres have their own heritage of the art. Theatrical traditions of all kinds, including architecture, are so rich as to require their own exhaustive studies, like that of Clifford Reis Jones, and this survey will touch upon only a few points that relate to temple design in general. For example, the concept of theatre structure as a *maṇḍapa* within a *maṇḍapa* is traced by Jones to the form of *srikovil* buildings.[246] Mention has already been made of the purity of geometry and proportion that is illustrated by theatre constructions like that of Kudalmanikkam, with their high roof peaks usually lacking gables, and of the beautifully involved form of the *kūttambalam* ceiling.

The latter element is illustrated in plan as consisting of three rectangles, one within the other, linked by diagonal crossbeams. The rectangles are three supporting *uttara-prastara* elements with areas between them filled by a network of beams, rafters, and angle studs. [247]

Stage design has been only touched upon, and the drama of performances with attendant music has been hinted at. Brief references as part of analysis of sculptural forms in the round and in relief, along with description of paintings, have suggested ties from stationary arts to the theatre of Kathākali and other traditions. But full treatment of dramatic arts and even theatre structures does not fall within the scope of this survey. Instead, theatre design will be treated only in terms of one of the most exciting challenges of modern Kerala art: the building of a new theatre Kalamandalam in central Kerala under the direction of D. Appukuttan Nair in 1977.

The theatre project has been noted in an earlier section, without detail, so that further information is called for here. Explanation of the *Nātya Gṛha* is provided by D. Appukuttan Nair himself. [248] The building is intended for performance of all indoor theatrical forms such as Kūttu, Kūtiyāttam, and Mohiniyāttam, for which the *nāṭakaśāla* dancing place at Padmanābhapuram Palace was used,. whereas forms like Kathākali and Tullal may be performed indoors or outdoors. Other forms such as Teyyam and Multiyerru are held in the open, "where the stage is not static, but moving" [249] The normal placement for a sacred theatre is to the right of a temple within its precincts, and its size and proportions are normally determined according to the *Silparatna* of Śrī Kumara. About 20 such buildings survive today. When separate theatres were not built, the arts were performed within spaces of the *valiambalam* or *vāthil māṭam* as integral parts of temples.[250]

Many elements of the *Nāṭya Gṛha* are familiar from architectural examples surveyed here, including pierced gables, slatted walls, convoluted entry porch screen, triple *stūpi* pinnacles and steeply sloping roofs. Certain parts are those usually found at temples proper, such as the metal flagstaff. The interior of the building is much adorned, and there are abundant carvings made of both wood and stone. Metal ornaments are found as well.

Organization of the long rectangular plan of the new theatre, measuring 96 feet by 34 feet, is from *mukha mandapa* entrance to *valiyambalam* platform entrance to *rangamandala* as open audience hall with granite columns to the *rangapītha* stage area. And there is a roofed verandah 7½ feet wide called *churrambalam,* all around the *nāṭya grha.* The forward edge of the stage with its four columns begins at a line just under the central point of the total structure and directly below the central *stūpi.* This pinnacle is itself placed at the converging axis lines of the four cardinal directions. [251] As in temple design the *stūpi* consists of a *pūrṇa ghaṭa* pot-form surmounted by "lotus," "stem," and uppermost "bud." [252]

There are *mattavāranī* extensions on each side of the stage. A dressing area is

at the back, called *raṅgaśīrṣa,* and a makeup room or *naipathya* also behind the stage. None of the spaces is large, except that of the audience hall itself, and Nair points out that the intimate plan is appropriate to gesture-oriented dramatic styles. It is also essential that facial expressions be recognizable. At Guruvayur, Trichur, and Irinjalakuda the inner or main pillars of the audience hall stand on the periphery of a large inner terrace, paved and raised, that was formerly reserved for the upper classes. Beyond this is a secondary colonnade *(madhyama)* of 16 inner columns and 24 outer ones.[253]

Nair reminds that the *prekṣaka* or spectator generally sits near the stage and is able to study the subtleties not only of hand and body gestures but the movement of eyes, eyebrows, lips, and cheeks. And he explains the lack of stage settings as allowing the actor to create mental visions in the spectator "without the aid of any stage equipments or artifices."[254] The proportions of the Madhyama Vikrsta Nātyamandapa as medium sized structure much like this building, are lauded by Bharata in the classical *Nāṭya Śāstra* (Chapter II) as follows :

PLATES 178 A, 178 B, 178 C, 178 D

> The Nāṭyamaṇḍapa for human beings should be 64H long and 32H wide [H = Hasta, equal to 18 inches]. No one should build it bigger than this; because, then the Nāṭya would become indistinct. If the stage is too far away, the voice would become indistinct or distorted, since the actors will be compelled to shout out their speeches. Similarly, the facial expressions and movements of the eyes will not be clear. Of all the Nāṭyamaṇḍapas, the Madhyama is the best, because then you hear the speech and songs and see also the facial expressions in the best manner.[255]

The modern interpretation of 1977 includes *dvārapālas* made of stone beside the *mukha maṇḍapa* as "lobby" entrance, and its door is richly carved with lotus medallions and other fine wooden designs. Inside, the granite columns bear the 108 *karaṇās* prescribed in the *Nāṭya Śāstra (*Chapter IV) as basic units of the combined movement of the limbs of the human body. Selective combination of *karaṇās* produces *aṇgahāras* that are 32 in number.[256] Lotus medallions are found at the base of granite columns that are themselves extremely rare in traditional theatres. Much more common are wooden pillars that are shaped by lathe-turning, and lacquer decoraed by use of lac-sticks, heat, and friction in hues of deep orange with accents of black, yellow, and viridian. The craft is nearly lost today.[257] The stage area itself, entirely freestanding, has four columns of wood adorned with lotus roundels, and a double roof topped by its own *stūpi.* Sculptures and paintings mark all parts of this, and the building as a whole. In summary, the new theatre brings greater life and immediacy to an old and viable tradition. Chola, Nāyaka, and other influences are evident in theatre structures, as in the *bodhikā* corbel-brackets of Chola type and *nāsikā bandha* repeated floral motif popularized in Nāyaka times, but the total conglomerate is special. It is integral with all sacred architecture.

B. Quilon Arts

Rameśvara Temple (Quilon District) and Special Details

Rameśvara provides a clear review of familiar elements from Kerala temple design as this study moves further south and towards monuments that are sometimes hybrid designs. An inscription at the site refers to King Rāmaṉ Tiruvadi Kulaśekhara Koyilādhikāri, another name for Rāmavarma Kulaśekhara, one of the greatest rulers of the Chera Dynasty. It is dated in the Kollam year 278 (1103 A.D.),[258] yet the *adhiṣṭhāna* of the temple is the highly elaborate variety that belongs to the Late Phase of temple art,[259] with an equally developed *upapīṭha* below. Its *praṇāla* is also a late type. with long fluted shaft emerging from the mouth of a rampant lion. It is termed the most ornate known, not only in Kerala but in Tamil Nadu itself, and is a direct Pāṇḍya model supported by a seated *gaṇa.*[260] H. Sarkar judges the temple to be the most impressive in Quilon, with its concentration of Drāviḍa temples, while pointing to the area as the most important port in south Kerala and a place that the Venāḍu rulers sought to transform into a religious center. Still, he refers to Rameśvara as "stripped of all its former grandeur."[261] Rāmavarma Kulaṣekhara is called *koyiladhikāri* in the inscription, "controller" of the temple. Other inscriptions date from Kollam 516 (1343 A.D.) and Kollam 513 (1337–38 A.D.), and the temple underwent renovation in the first half of the 14th century.[262] The base is the only part of the present building that can be dated to this time, with its Pāṇḍya and Choḷa patterns. As a whole the building must always have been in Kerala style, unlike a Ganapati structure nearby. The *garbha gṛha* contains a Śiva *linga* on square *pīṭha* with no columns inside. Two pyramidal roofs rise above the *srikovil.*

PLATE 179

There are three subsidiary shrines in the courtyard, honoring Subrahmaṇya, Chaṇḍeśa, and Ganapati, but there is little of note in their patterns. Only the Subrahmaṇya image with its openwork peacock carved of stone is of some interest, along with an extremely rotund Ganapati and two-armed Chaṇḍeśa of black granite. Little is special in the entire complex, other than the well-rendered base. The *balipitha* is exposed in the open; the setting is plain. The temple stands for the direct simplicity of Kerala construction, as opposed to the scheme of ornament that often blankets temple buildings. Structure here is logical and essential. The entry porch is very open with all structural parts exposed, and the under roof of the *namaskāra mandapa* comes to a peak with a descending, fixed pendant of wood at its center. Beams fan out from this point umbrella fashion, as in Nepal, but with four intersecting horizontal beams that are not known in the Himalaya. These create spaces of nine squares, like ceiling patterns of directional deities, but without either carved panels or lowered flat ceiling.

PLATE 180

A large *maṇḍapa* extends from the two-roof *srikovil,* on its western and entry side, with its own prominent gable. Of some interest is the direct *sopāna* that leads up to the interior floor level, because of its banister carvings. Their subjects, elephantine *vyālas (gajavyālas),* are not unusual but their design is noted for its

PLATE 181 FIGURE 29

voluptuous curves. Each trunk spills down the length of the stairs with two raised bumps and a very large enrolled curl at the bottom. The body of each monster flows along with it, the head twisted back to produce the descending line of the trunk. In contrast to the severity of the white-washed structure as a whole, this stone part, the balustrade, is as baroque as the carvings of Chengannur. One hind foot of the lion-shaped *praṇāla* rests on the head of a seated dwarf that belongs to the interspace of the *adhiṣṭhāna* and *upapīṭha*.[263] And mention has been made at Chengannur of Subrahmaṇya entering neighboring space with his dangling leg, The *vyālas* of Rameśvara are in the position of climbing the stairs and they require no such dramatic extension beyond their own space, for they are dynamic in themselves. In their volute trunks they carry flowers.

With its ordinary *chaturāśra* plan, the square temple has no extra doors and almost no decoration of the walls. Points that refer to Tamil Nadu are the absence of a *śukanāsa,* clarity of *grīvā* over *ekatala vimāna* and the nature of the *parivara devatas*.[264] Other parts, reduced to structural essentials, belong to Kerala itself. And a few parts are indeed special: the sculptures in subsidiary shrines, the fully round *pranāla* with lion and dwarf, and the evocative balustrade *vyālas.* Criticism becomes complex as building elements must be separated, defined, and traced to their origins. The process is perhaps most entangled in southern Kerala.

Chittumala Devī at Kallada (Quilon District): A Look Inside

In the village of Kallada near Kudara, this temple of Quilon District could be easily dismissed. It is almost entirely reconstructed, with circular *srikovil* preceded by square *namaskāra maṇḍapa.* The contrast of copper-roofed cone and pyramid has been seen in other, more important examples. Its wooden *dvārapālas* are obviously additive rather than integrated, and they are not of high quality. The balustrade is heavy, with awkward carvings so as to be a hollow copy of its models. Yet the construction offers something, for through a side entry it affords a glimpse of the kind of interior structure that has been mentioned often: a separate Drāviḍa *vimāna* surrounded by *sāndhāra* passage without structural connection to the outer roof. Pierced with its own minor screen windows, this inner building is independent shelter of the *garbha gṛha* complete with small tower roof. Columns surround it within the *sāndhāra* passage. Plain, renovated, even awkward in some of its parts, this small temple clearly represents the internal *vimāna* as separate entity that characterizes southern Kerala architecture particularly.

PLATE 182

Chennamattu Mahādeva at Chattannur (Quilon District) as "Ordinary" Monument.

Small size and circular plan again characterize the temple of Chennamattu Mahādeva, covered with "Dutch" tiles and set within a small and much renovated courtyard. The *dvārapālas* beside its single door are pink, surprisingly, and their forms are spirited. And numerous details of stone carving are worth attention. As is typical, the Śiva shrine is entered through a low porch with gable

PLATE 183

that is an extension of cloister walls covered with ordinary tiles. The outer surfaces are whitewashed and lack oil lamp screens. Rather than any preliminary structures, the *srikovil* itself is attractive, because of its somewhat fragile size and the sculpture of its granite walls. Southern Kerala monuments are characterized by greater use of this stone, and here the base nearly becomes the entire wall, for there is no obvious break between circular mouldings of *adhiṣṭhāna* and *bhitti*. There are three false doors, below one of which a *praṇāla* drain extends in fluted form with three decorative rings, all emerging from a *siṁha* mouth. Eight small windows, each with four pierced panels and a sculptural niche, are cut into the circular wall. The panel reliefs include a frontal image of Gaṇeśa with *vyāla* false brackets overhead, along with Siva at rest holding Parvati on his knee, and Narasiṁha in *yogāsana* pose. Little paint and no plaster adorn the walls, so that there is more than usual textural effect of granite. There are relief carvings of divine subjects on the outer sides of the stone balustrade, and supporting dwarfs below the two guardian figures are especially strong in their compressed energy.

C. Trivandrum and Kanyakumari Districts—The Southernmost Styles and Padmanābhasvāmi

Kanyakumari District is part of Tamil Nadu state, but it belongs to traditional Kerala culture. Monuments within Trivandrum District and this area are the most hybrid, but at the same time often the most grand. As milestone of the entire state and spiritual refuge of the former ruling line, Padmanābhasvāmi temple in Trivandrum city is of restricted access and therefore has not been examined as part of this survey. Its legendary date of origin is 3100 B.C.[265] It is known to contain murals of the 18th century of earlier (*Travancore Archaeological Series,* Vol. I, II, VII) and the rebuilding of the temple by Bala Mārtānda Varma. The paintings "were executed in purely native style and were perhaps the latest record of indigenous paintings of the best sort on a somewhat large scale," according to scholar and devotee R.V. Poduval.[266] Also found there are some of the best late carvings in Kerala.

Among wooden arts are ceiling carvings that Poduval dates to the late 14th century and the reign of King Aditya Varma Sarvanganātha.[267] And there are 45 panels of the interior Rameśvāmi shrine that treat *Rāmāyaṇa* subjects, dated 1744 A.D., also during the reign of Mahārāja Mārtāṇḍa Varma and of an age that haś been called a late "heyday" of Kerala art. Each panel measures about 7 feet long, for a total frieze length of 300 feet. A comparable carving, almost life-size and made of a single piece of wood, is said to represent Rāma in the Ranga Vilasom Palace of the city.

There is a temple of Kṛṣṇa that is datable to the 11th century or earlier, but most important is a monument to Śri Padmanābha as patron god of the land, as well as tutelary deity of the *rāja* lineage. Its core shrine, of praises sung by Nammāḷvār, belongs to the Early Phase of temple art.[268] It is entered by way of a tremendous *gopura* of Tamil Nadu style and proportion that is entirely covered

with stone sculptures and shimmering architectural motifs. It appears to support the statement of V. Nagam Aiya that," the northern limit of the Dravidian style is Trivandrum"[269] but in fact a few more northerly expressions of this kind of architecture do exist. Inside of its walls there are buildings of more purely Kerala variety, much mixed with columned halls of stone and other "southern" elements. Along with European borrowings in all of the arts, these add to the cosmopolitan nature of Late Phase art in general. To varying degrees, the final works treated in this survey reveal that character. This particular monument reportedly centers upon an image of Śri Padmanābha in the form of *Sudhā Mūrti* made of *chunam* or lime, with 12,000 embedded *salagramams.*

Śrī Mahādeva at Kazhakuttam (Trivandrum District) as Ornate Seed

Florid style surrounds the walls of the Śrī Mahādeva temple at Kazhakuttam, a two-roof monument covered with copper and attached to a large projecting *maṇḍapa.* It has large and numerous false doors, *nāsikā* windows, and vaulted miniature shrines projecting from its white laterite walls. Four curvilinear gables, also roofed with copper, face the cardinal directions at the top. It is dated to the 14th century *(Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume VI, p. 34) with its relatively plain base contrasted by the porous and deeply shadowed structure above. Renovation was carried out in the Kollam year 645 (1470 A.D.), along with reconsecration of the image *(Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume VI, pp. 33–34). At this time the roofs were covered with copper. A sub-shrine on the northeast corner of the temple encloses an important image of Viṣṇu, standing and four-armed, that is ascribed to the Early Phase of Kerala art, in about the ninth century A.D. Other sub-shrines belong to Śiva, Gaṇapati, Kṛṣṇa, and Śāstā. Despite its elaboration, the Śiva building is called by Soundara Rajan an "arche-type of the early medieval Kerala temple, before the typical Kerala trappings overwhelmed it."[270] The pilastered walls and pillar components are very ornate. Under both roofs architectonic projections and stone figures alternate with carved wooden brackets that are brightly painted, yet fairly subdued.

PLATE 184
FIGURE 30

East, as most frequent orientation, is the direction of the main opening of the temple. Its attached *maṇḍapa* is surrounded by a structure built in 1470, the *tirchchurrü maṇḍapa,* that practically encloses the front part of the shrine and is typical of south Kerala. The original temple may not have had any *maṇḍapa* at all, according to Sarkar.[271] Less changed, certainly, is the laterite *vimāna* proper, for its pattern is early and traditional. A wooden door occupies the center of each of the four walls, with the openings entering an ambulatory, without columns, that surrounds a square *garbha gṛha* with central *liṅga.* It is possible to view the interior of the *srikovil* construction through the dismantled ceiling of the *maṇḍapa,* showing that the inner walls continue up all the way to the second storey level and its ceiling. There is no *namaskāra maṇḍapa,* but the entry *maṇḍapa* is designed to hold *dikpāla* directional guardians, their carving style being crisp and formal. They are as understated as the building itself is overblown. Over and

beyond all discussion of style, the building is sacred; a place of closed eyes and open hearts. The energetic line of *maṇḍapa* balustrades that swoops down from *siṁha* mouths over carved patterns of miniature shrine niches conveys a kind of divine charge from Śiva to his worshippers.

Lost Arts of Manambur Subrahmaṇya at Varkalla (Trivandrum District)

Situation is remarkable at Varkalla, for the temple of Manambur Subrahmaṇya is located at the base of a cliff on top of which is found a small village. Its somewhat remote locale is a sad disadvantage in at least one sense: local information is that many carved panels and bracket figures were stolen from the site several years ago. Spaces where the panels existed are now filled with unadorned masonry. The essential art has been amputated.

PLATE 185

The *srikovil* is circular, with square *namaskāra maṇḍapa* before it in typical Kerala pattern. Its cloister is largely thatched rather than tile-covered, as reminder of roofing methods that were once more widespread than today. The plan of the complex is classic, and easily viewed in its entirety from the laterite cliff behind it. A bathing tank is at the front right of the temple, and a very open *gopura* provides access through an outer wall of stone, joining a tiled hall with platforms. This opens into the courtyard with copper-covered *namaskāra maṇḍapa* and cone-roofed *srikovil,* also covered with the reddish metal. A shrine to Śāstā stands outside of the cloister boundary at the rear, containing a small stone image of the seated god that is dressed in red cloth. Inside of the main building is found a standing stone figure of Subrahmaṇya, also dressed in red.

The *agra maṇḍapa* porch that follows the *gopura* has a plain ceiling now, although it rests on a cornice border with classical wish-fulfilling vine motif. The underside of this is marked by roundels and small but active bracket figures on elephant supports. Enclosed space is not large, with a stone *balipīṭha* and separate lotus sculpture in its center, but it is well lighted by means of slatted walls. And its fanning ceiling beams are of scallop-form, like those of the Mattancheri palace and a great many Kerala structures. There are benches all around this place of preparation, and painted stone carvings as part of four stone columns represent Lakṣmana with attendant on the right, and Rāma with Sītā on the left. Dīpa-lakṣmī females also adorn the columns.

PLATE 186

The structure is fronted by double gables, the upper of which carved with one of the finest gable images in the south. Behind four columns with both circular capitals and superimposed quadrupal crossbeams and under rippling angular and horizontal borders is a large representation of Gajalakṣmī. The goddess Lakṣmī with her elephants is voluptuous, with her breasts outlined by jewelry bands, and she holds the undulating stems of two lotus buds in her hands. The curves of the plants are repeated in the raised trunks of her flanking elephants who shower her with blessings from water vessels, and then repeated again in a floral frame that encloses the entire wooden composition. Below this design, one of the finest gable

PLATE 187

PLATE 188

sculptures in Kerala, is a smaller and simpler gable that appropriately presents a carved image of Subrahmaṇya. The god of the temple is shown in three-quarter view atop his peacock, swinging and asymmetrical with a cushion of lush vegetation below. The bird spreads its wings and spreads its tail to form both a circular frame and backdrop for the deity.

Inside the Subrahmaṇya court, its *namaskāra maṇḍapa* has a directional ceiling of nine panels centered upon Brahmā, with other gods as austere companions, all with hand *mudrās* that convey discourse and blessing. Beyond this, the base of the round *srikovil* is very plain, almost unfinished in appearance, except for some lions and elephants in procession just below the *bhitti.* The *praṇāla* has a rare straight form that lacks rhythm as it is supported by a seated lion. Dramatic projecting dwarfs may be noted as having once supported brackets that are now missing. In fact it is no longer possible to support H. Sarkar's inclusion of this temple among those that deserve special mention for walls "carved minutely with beautiful figure sculptures." [272] The loss of wooden art at Varkalla underlines the urgency of both study and protection of these ephemeral monuments made of perishable materials.

The one functional door of the *srikovil* with its twin *dvārapālas* is almost met by the overhanging roof of the separate porch. Guardians are like the lateral-approach balustrade in being very ornamental and somewhat subdued by accretionary detail of Late Phase variety. Aprons on the *dvārapālas* are built up of overlain jewels, and the sides of the *sopāna* balustrade are filled with loops of jewelry as well as multiple gods. At the center of this, Lakṣmī is again shown in the position of lustration by elephants. The balustrade ends in swooping "tails" of vegetation that nearly obscure inward-facing *makaras* as symbols of the fertile abundance that is already physically present in decorative patterns. Inside the *srikovil* door, both the wall of the square *garbha gṛha,* with its separate opening, and the octagonal tower of an independent *vimāna,* may be seen. The latter is joined to the shrine building as a whole only be connecting horizontal beams. It has an octagonal form above the lintel of its door, and it is marked by a false niche having vegetal patterns what may be an indication of Subrahmanya himself. The inner roof appears to be a corbel dome. The *vimāna,* at least, is still intact.

Paraśurāmeśvara Temple (Trivandrum District)

Located not far from the sea at Tiruvallam, near Trivandrum, the grouping of buildings known as the Paraśurāmeśvara Temple prescribes in part to *śilpa-śāstra* descriptions of *ghata-prāsāda* designs wherein narrow porches project out of circular shrines to generally resemble in plan a *ghata* pitcher. [273] It dates to the middle of the 12th century but it has been very much renovated from Late Phase times to the present, with abundant brilliant paint. More than any monument yet mentioned the site shows the coming together of many styles from many places. *Adhiṣṭhāna* treatment, for example, is again that of Tamil Nadu, and the tall spire over the Mahādeva shrine here is a corbelled *śikhara* that is not of Kerala

FIGURE 31

type. The Drāviḍa *vimāna* already discussed as occurring inside some Kerala temples now exists as a freestanding structure in its own right, in the shrines to Paraśurāma, Brahmā, and Matsyamūrti within the temple bounds.[274] Kerala elements do survive, as in the circular or *ghaṭa*-shaped *ekatala* plan of the Paraśurāma temple that faces north with a pyramidal *namaskāra maṇḍapa* before it. This structure, probably dating to the 17th century, is one of the latest. But the complex is in a sense transitional, as more purely Kerala style is left behind. Inscriptions on the *adhiṣṭhāna* base range in date from Kollam Era 399 (1224 A.D.) to 412 (1327 A.D.) to date the nucleus of the monument (*Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume III, pp. 37–44). They come mostly from the Brahmā shrine, with that of Paraśurāma probably dating from the late 17th century.[275]

Nilakaṇṭhasvāmi near Padmanābhapuram (Kanyakumari District)

PLATE 189

Many elements referred to earlier can be traced at this impressive monument located just outside of the grounds of Padmanābhapuram Palace in an area that was once the seat of dynastic rule in Kerala. There are sacred trees, snakestones, a bathing tank, stone columns, and capitals with lotus buds. Those parts that are the same in terms of structure and ornament, however, were imports when found as part of proper Kerala temples. Nilakaṇṭhasvāmi belongs to the Tamil Nadu tradition from which Kerala largely separated from the Early Phase onward. Its magnificent temple traditions are a very much related yet separate subject that is studied independently for its own considerable merits. Kerala style buildings do indeed "lack both the costliness and the grandeur of the Dravidian structure,"[276] but they have their own open purity of form. More relevant than the stone structure are subsidiary arts, like very large wooden animals meant to be carried in procession that are stored here as *vahana* attendants to the gods.

Thirunārāyaṇappuram (Trivandrum District)

PLATE 190

Attingal Taluk in Trivandrum District is home of a temple compound built entirely of stone to enshrine an image of Viṣṇu: Thirunārāyaṇappuram. It is shrouded by forest and in need of the protection that it has from the Kerala State Department of Archaeology.

PLATES 191, 192

Viṣṇu appears in four-armed standing pose and made of stone inside the double-walled *garbha gṛha* with a small metal image for processions at his feet. The style of carving is exactly that of many Kerala sculptures. *Dvārapālas* compare to many that are found on the southeast coast, and the *namaskāra maṇḍapa,* although corbelled and made of stone with a *śikhara* tower, has a ceiling of nine squares. The walls have pierced stone screens, many base mouldings are the same as those of Kerala *adhiṣṭhāna* patterns, and the curved balustrades of the *sopāna* are disgorged from the mouths of *siṁhas.* Yet the total design of the beautiful monument, with two high *śikharas* made of stone to recall Choḷa, Nāyaka, Vijayanagar and other modes, belongs to a unique and separate aesthetic tradition.

FIGURE 32

With Thirunārāyanappuram temple in Attingal Taluk, this survey reaches purely Drāvidian invention without contribution from Kerala aesthetics. K.V. Soundara Rajan calls it a "truly Tamil Nadu type straying into south Kerala by constant contiguous impacts and integrating, with the local features, like *namaskāra maṇḍapa,*"[277] while it does not pick up other parts like the *srikovil maṇḍapa* that are basic to Kerala design. There are cloister walls, and a *namaskāra maṇḍapa* and *vimāna,* each made of granite at the ground floor level and topped with an attenuated tower of laterite and stucco. The *garbha gṛha* has a *sāndhāra* interior plan. But most beautiful are wall surfaces entirely cloaked in three-dimensional sculpture, organic and *praṇa*-filled. The stone towers of Thirunārāyaṇappuram are impressive and important but they do not belong to Kerala tradition.

Fully southern and fully Indian, the Kerala way of temple form and meaning retains its own clear definition, its own boundaries of wonder. This study has attempted to demarcate the distribution of that remarkable art, and to touch upon its relation to other South Asian temple conventions. Aesthetic concerns have been primary, with emphasis upon special accomplishments in wood and paint, as a selective inventory of monuments has been presented, including palaces. The last word has not been written, certainly. Rather, this work is intended to serv · as a starting point for intensive research into individual monuments that still survive unchanged in form, function, and historical significance. It has been an extraordinary privilege to approach and come to know these important expressions of Kerala creativity.

Notes

1 Paraśurāma is an incarnation of Viṣṇu as the son of a Brāhman named Jamadagni who was killed by the sons of the wicked King Kārtavīrya.

2 A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, p. 10.

3 A. Achyuta Menon, "A Note on Kali or Bhagavati Cult of Kerala."

4 William Logan, *Malabar*, Volume 1, pp. 185-186.

5 K. Raghavan Pillai (ed.), *Musikavamśa of Atula* (translated by N. P. Unni).

6 K. G. Krishnan, "Tirukkuṇavāy and the inscription from Alattur," pp. 27-32.

7 S. S. Koder, *History of the Jews of Kerala*, p. 5.

8 K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Volume 1, p. 29.

9 A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, p. 23.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

12 A. Sreedhara Menon (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteer—Trichur*, p. 614.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

14 Clifford Reis Jones, *The Temple Theatre of Kerala: Its History and Description*, p. 47.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

16 Although Nairs are not considered to belong to the highest caste, their social and religious prominence is such that in most areas they function at the level of Brahmans.

17 K. P. Padmanabha Menon, from whose work comments on domestic proportion and design are drawn, goes on to list all classes of houses.

18 Females are required to dwell separately because of concerns regarding menstrual pollution as well as propriety.

19 A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteer—Trichur*, p. 613.

20 V. Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Volume IV, p. 547.

21 K. P. Padmanabha Menon, Volume 1, pp. 173-181.

22 A. Sreedhara Menon, *Cultural Heritage of Kerala—An Introduction*, p. 31.

23 Heinrich Zimmer. *The Art of Indian Asian*, Volume 1, p. 26.

24 Details of house design are further analyzed by V. Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, Volume III, pp. 277-278.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 279.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, New Edition, Volume XVII, p. 53.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 Recent investigation in prehistoric rock art includes the work of K. J. John of the University of Calicut and S.P. Tampi of the Kerala State Department of Archaeology.

33 Kramrisch, Stella, J. H. Cousins, R. Vasudeva Poduval, *The Arts and Crafts of Kerala*, p. 136.

34 T. Ganapati Sastri (ed.), *The Śilparatna of Śrī Kumāra, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series*, Number LXXV, Trivandrum, 1922 (translated by N. P. Unni).

35 Trees listed by the *Śilparatna* as not conducive to happiness if used to build houses include Palāsa *(Butea frondosa)*, Kuṭaja *(Wrightia antidysenterica)*, Lodhra *(Symplocos racemosā)*, Bilva

(Aegle marmelos), Pilu *(Careya arborea)*, Siriṣaka *(Acaria sirissa)*, Śleṣmātaka *(Cordia latifolia)*, Kadamba *(Nuclea cadamba)*, Kodidāra *(Bauhinia variegata)*, and at least 32 other varieties.

36 P. Thankappan Nair, "Tree symbol worship among Nairs of Kerala," p. 94.

37 Four milk sap trees are used: the country fig or *Ficus glomerata, Ficus infectoria, Ficus religiosa* or Pipal tree, and Banyan.

38 For notes on the sanctity of earth that is purified by fire in South India see N. K. Majumdar, "Sacrificial Altars: Vedis and Agnis."

39 H. Sarkar, *An Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala*, p. 63.

40 Others of the eleven types include the *ūrdhavaloṣta* with length of 12 *angulas*, breadth one-third of its length, and thickness of 1 *yava* for uniform appearance. *Putaloṣtha, garta konaloṣta,* and *konaloṣta* have the same thickness as the *nivraloṣta* brick and all are 8 *aṅgulas* long, but their breadth differs from 4 *angulas* at the base and 1½ *aṅgulas* at the tip, 1½ *angulas* at the base and 4 *angulas* at the tip, and up to 8 *aṅguḷas* at the base and 1½ *aṅgulas* at the tip respectively. For the *kuralosta, dvaśralosta,* and *turyaśralosta* the length is 8 *aṅgulas*, breadth is 2 *aṅgulas*, and thickness is 3 *yavas*. Three final types differ in their shapes for they are made to fill gaps that are left at the end of a line of tiles rather than be spread over the roof surface. Of these a *kīlaloṣta* tile has breadth half that of other tiles of its line, a *kṛṣāgraloṣta* is the same breadth as other tiles of its line but its tip is only half that size, and a *sthūlagralosta* tile is the opposite of *kṛṣāgraloṣṭa* type with standard breadth at the tip but its base reduced by half.

41 H. Sarkar, p. 63

42 S. P. Tampi and Ronald M. Bernier, "Prehistoric Painting in South India," p. 66

43 Robert R. R. Brooks and Vishnu S. Wakankar, *Stone Age Painting in India.*

44 A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, p. 44.

45 *Ibid.*, p 46.

46 T. K. Joseph, "A Cave Temple at Trupparappu," p. 50.

47 V. T. Induchudan, *The Secret Chamber*, p. 2.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

49 C. Achyuta Menon, p. 237.

50 H. H. Kerala Varma Thampuran, "Kāli Cult in Kerala," p. 77.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

52 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 32.

53 Although they are historically significant, the four rock-shelters that H. Sarkar (pp. 41-43) traces to early Chera times will not be treated here because their forms are very plain.

54 Stella Kramrisch *et al.*, p. 71.

55 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 33.

56 M. G. S. Narayan, *Political and Social Conditions of Kerala under the Kulaśekhara Empire.* p. 614.

57 Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India—Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, p. 301.

58 H. Sarkar, p. 47.

59 *Ibid.*

60 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

61 "Inscription of the Rock-cut Cave at Tirunandikkara," p. 201.

62 J. H. Cousins, "Ancient Frescoes in Travancore—History-making Discovery at Tirunandikkara," p. 17.

63 K. B. Iyer, "Shadow Play in Malabar."

64 H. Sarkar, p. 60.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

66 Sadasyatilaka T. K. Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Volume IX, p. 592.

67 N. Subrahmania Sastri, "An Analysis of Bhakti," p. 181.

68 M. G. S. Narayan, pp. 624, 629.

69 S. Padmanabhan, *Temples of South India,* p. 1.
70 H. Sarkar, p. 13.
71 Dates of the Śaṅgam age remain somewhat controversial with much evidence based upon the dates of literary works (Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History,* Chapter VIII).
72 H. Sarkar, p. 16.
73 The chronology is drawn from H. Sarkar to harmonize with his order of temple art evolution (pp. 16-40).
74 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 3?
75 H. Sarkar, p. 19.
76 K. P. Padmanabhan Menon, Vol. 1, p. 44.
77 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 31.
78 The important Vāḻapaḻḻi inscription refers to both kings, dating from the twelfth regnal year of Rājaśekharavarman. It makes an interesting reference to *dināra* currency, which must have been Arab gold currency circulating in 9th century Kerala *(Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume II, Part I, pp. 8-14).
79 "What is M. E.," p. 31.
80 H. Sarkar (p. 32 records the geology of this important Chera age as follows: Kulaśekharavarman (800-820); Rājaśekharavarman (820-844); Sthānu Ravivarman (844-885); Rāmavarman Kulaśekhara (885-917); Kodai Ravivarman (917-947); Indu Kodaivarman (947-962); Bhāskara Ravivarman I (962–1020); Bhāskara Ravivarman II (978–1025); Ravi Rāmavarman (1025-1035); Bhāskara Ravivarman III (1035-1090); Rāmavarma Kulaśekhara (1090-1106) and Srīvalarama (1090-1100).
81 Kramrisch, *et al.,* pp. 3-12, quoted in Clifford Reis Jones, p. 35.
82 *Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume II, pp. 87-113.
83 H. Sarkar, p. 34.
84 *Ibid.,* p. 35.
85 *Ibid.*
86 *Ibid.*
87 Robert Sewell, *The Historical Inscriptions of Southern India,* p. 112.
88 H. Sarkar, p. 36.
89 *Ibid.*
90 See K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *The Zamorins of Calicut.*
91 H. Sarkar, p. 40
92 K. P. Padmanabha Menon, Vol. IV, p. 167.
93 *Ibid.,* p. 31.
94 *Ibid.,* p. 166, quoting Astley, *A New Collection of Voyages.*
95 Stella Kramrisch *et al.,* p. 32.
96 K. P. Padmanabha Menon, Vol. IV, p. 31, quoting Astley.
97 All of the palace shrines are closed to non-Hindus. Their entrances may be glimpsed from outside walls or from certain upstairs windows of the palace. The size of the shrine buildings is small.
98 R. Vasudeva Poduval relates these works to murals at the Śankaranārāyana shrine in the temple complex of Vadakkumnathan at Trichur that is dated by inscription to September 23, 1731 (Kramrisch *et al.,* p. 166).
99 A. Sreedhara Menon (ed.) *Kerala District Gazetteer —Ernakulam,* p. 88.
100 P. Anujan Achan, "The Marriage Scene of Uma as depicted in the Walls of the Mattāncheri Palace at Cochin," pp. 13-14.
101 The shell of the seed is removed and its yellow interior is soaked overnight, then ground to a soft paste. It must be made fresh daily because it is useless if dry (Jayantilal T. Parekh,

"The Technique of Mural paintings," p. 31).

102 A. Sreedhara Menon (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteer—Ernakulam,* p. 88.
103 Stella Kramrisch *et al.,* p. 167.
104 M. K. Devassy (ed.), *Census of India 1961,* Volume VII, p. 175.
105 A fine drawing of the pillar is found in the above, p. 174.
106 Stella Kramrisch *et al.,* p. 152.
107 R. Vasudeva Poduval, *A Short Guide to Padmanabhapuram,* pp. 1–4.
108 T'ang Chinese records list Quilon as the chief Chinese settlement of the time, called "Mahlai," and note that several embassies were sent by Malabar kings to the Emperor of China. Trade flourished in the 8th and 9th centuries and again during the 13th century according to V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual,* Volume 1, p. 244.
109 R. Vasudeva Poduval, *A Short Guide to Padamanabhapuram.*
110 J. H. Cousins, "The Art of Decorations," p. 17.
111 Krishna Chaitanya. *History of Indian Painting—The Mural Tradition,* plate 66.
112 Stella Kramrisch *et al.,* p. 165
113 *Ibid.,* p. 180
114 *Ibid.*
115 Sadasyatilaka T. K. Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual,* Volume IV, p. 537.
116 The *mukha maṇḍapa* is a likely addition to the original plan that lacked it, as was usual in Mūshika country (H. Sarkar, p. 64).
117 K. V. Soundara Rajan, *Temple Architecture in Kerala,* p. 114.
118 H. Sarkar, p. 179.
119 *Ibid.*
120 K. V. Soundara Rajan, figure 16.
121 *Ibid.,* p. 115.
122 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 92.
123 Govinda Krishna Pillai, *The Way of the Silpis,* p. 1.
124 K. Raghavan Pillai, "The Influence of Sanskrit on Malayalam," p. 143.
125 T. Ganapati Sastri (ed.), *The Śilparatna of Śrī Kumāra,* p. 1.
126 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 36.
127 K. R. Pisharoti, "Śrimulasthānam," p. 150.
128 T. Ganapati Sastri (ed.), *Tantrasamuchchaya,* p. 1.
129 *Ibid.*
130 The time division into two major periods is purposed by Clifford Reis Jones in his *The Temple Theatre of Kerala.*
131 N. V. Mallayya, *Studies in Sanskrit Texts on Temple Architecture,* p. 26.
132 *Ibid.,* p. 178.
133 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 63.
134 M. G. S. Narayan, pp. 624, 629.
135 Stella Kramrisch *et al.,* p. 42.
136 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 125.
137 H. Sarkar, p. 246.
138 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 126.
139 H. Sarkar, p. 248.
140 The list of exterior elements at this temple is gathered from H. Sarkar, p. 248.
141 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 125.
142 *Ibid.,* p. 126.
143 H. Sarkar, p. 249.
144 *Memoir of Travancore Survey,* Volume 1, p. 20.
145 M. K. Devassy, "Fairs and Festivals of Kerala," p. 357.

146 H. Sarkar, p. 168.
147 C. Achyuta Menon, p. 235.
148 H. Sarkar, p. 69.
149 Stella Kramrisch *et al.*, p. 140.
150 H. Sarkar, p. 77. The author suggests that this and associated temples of the same plan may have been patronized by a particular line of rulers.
151 The animal-like limbs are sometimes interpreted to belong to Narasimha, but are more likely of any *vyāla*.
152 William Logan, Volume 11, p. CCLXiii.
153 U. Balakrishnan Nair, "The Varakkal Temple and Its Festival," p. 342.
154 H. Sarkar, p. 168.
155 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
156 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
157 C. S. Innes (ed.), *Madras District Gazetteer—Malabar,* p. 481.
158 H. Sarkar, p. 114.
159 Chola examples are the Airāvateśvara temple at Darasaram, from the reign of Rājarāja (1146-1173), the temple of Agastyeśvara at Atti from the time of Rājādhirāja II (1163-1178), and Kampahareśvara temple at Tribhuvanam from the reign of Kulottunga III who ruled from 1178 to 1218 (H. Sarkar, p. 231).
160 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 56.
161 K. V. Soundara Rajan, pp. 95-96.
162 Specific comparison is made to Sundaramūrti Nayanar of the 9th century and the temple of Tiruvanjikkalam by K. V. Soundara Rajan (p. 85).
163 A. Sreedhara Menon (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteer—Trichur,* p. 616.
164 Stella Kramrisch *et al.*, p. 168.
165 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 616.
166 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
167 H. Sarkar, p. 20.
168 *Ibid.*
169 T. V. R. Chandran, "The Cheraman Perumal Day," p. 82.
170 H. Sarkar, p. 84.
171 Such a single interior space for a multi-roofed structure is one important element that removes Kerala temples from close comparison to Nepalese architecture, as is an independent inner building.
172 H. Sarkar, p. 23.
173 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 80.
174 H. Sarkar, p. 54.
175 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 40.
176 The Mahārāja of Travancore is said to have placed a ruby onto the image in order to test its brilliance, whereupon the ruby merged with the stone; thus the name Kūdalmānikkam, "the idol of the ruby alloy." M K. Devassy, "Fairs and Festivals of Kerala," p. 334.
177 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 113.
178 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
179 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
180 *Ibid.*, pp. 63-65.
181 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
182 The structural temples here are probably somewhat later than the rock-cut monument of Vilinjam which relates to other southern traditions of the 8th century.
183 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva,* p. 68.
184 Although no "connection" is suggested here, the closest comparison to Kerala architectural parts in metal is found in the temples and palaces of Kathmandu Valley.

185 H. Sarkar, p. 24.
186 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
187 *Ibid.*, p. 214-215.
188 A renovation program that is now in the planning stages may be expected to restore the painted detail that is lost from the carvings.
189 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 86.
190 A. Sreedhara Menon (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteer —Kottayam,* p. 543.
191 S. Padmanabhan, p.. 105.
192 H. Sarkar, p. 271.
193 K V. Soundara Rajan, p. 86.
194 H. Sarkar, p. 271.
195 Stella Kramrisch *et al.*, p. 165.
196 *Ibid.*, p. 180.
197 *Ibid.*, p. 181.
198 *Ibid.*, p. 184.
199 A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History,* p. 375.
200 K. V. Soundara Rajan (pp. 68-69) praises the quality of Vazhapalli carving while identifying the following wall panel subjects: Lakṣhmī, Gaṇapati, Hanumant, Kṛṣṇa scenes including the Kāliya-damana, Tāṇḍava Siva, Dakṣiṇamūrti, Rāma with Hanumant, Hanumant with Sītā, Garuda carrying Viṣnu, the goddess Varāhī on a lion, Trivikrama, Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa, etc.
201 *Ibid.*, p. 67. See also: *Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume V, p. 180.
202 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
203 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
204 *Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume VII, p. 139.
205 H. Sarkar, p. 125.
206 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 71.
207 One of these is inscribed Kollam Era 876 (1701 A. D.).
208 H. Sarkar, p. 261.
209 A. Sreedhara Menon (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteer—Kottayam,* p. 512.
210 *Ibid.*, p. 513.
211 *Ibid.*
212 "Ettumanur," p. 30.
213 H. Sarkar, p. 260.
214 A. Sreedhara Menon (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteer—Kottayam,* p. 513.
215 Jayantilal T. Parekh, "The Technique of Mural Paintings," pp. 28-32.
216 *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
217 *Ibid.*, p. 30.
218 S. Paramasivan, "An Investigation into the Methods of the Mural Paintings," p. 23.
219 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
220 Parekh explains (p. 31) that the preparation of seeds involves removing their shells and soaking the yellow insides overnight in water, the grinding the material into a soft paste. It is used as a binding material by goldsmiths as well as painters.
221 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
222 R. Champakalakshmi, "New Light on the Cola Frescoes of Tanjore," p. 359.
223 S. Sanjiva Dev, "Madhava Menon," p. 25.
224 V. Nagam Aiya, p. 72.
225 J. H. Cousins, "The Art of Decorations", p. 17.
226 H. Sarkar, p. 166.
227 *Ibid.*

228 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
229 T. A. Gopinatha Rao, "Jaina and Bauddha Vestiges in Travancore," p. 124.
230 H. Sarkar, p. 118.
231 R. P. Nair, "Gajendramoksha—Two Treasures of Wood-carver's Art," p. 36.
232 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 54.
233 Legend explains that the Kerala king was told in a dream by Garuḍa that the Viṣṇu image was to be found in a river, that the king had it installed on the riverbank (there is a spring and pool beside Tiruvalla), and that the temple was then put up around the image (Emily Gilchriest Hatch, *Travancore*, p. 93).
234 V. Raghavan Nambyar, "Annals and Antiquities of Tiruvalla," p. 71.
235 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
236 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 53.
237 Emily Glichriest Hatch, p. 93.
238 M. K. Devassy, "Fairs and Festivals of Kerala," p. 153.
239 H. Sarkar, p. 249.
240 Śiva and Pārvatī are worshipped here, one unusual rite being that of "Tripoothu" as menstruation of the goddess. Her image is secluded for three days, then purified after a miraculously red-spotted cloth is removed from it (S. Padmanabhan, p. 134).
241 M. S. Duraswami Ayyangar, "The Architecture of Travancore Temples," p. 1095.
242 H. Sarkar, p. 249.
243. *Ibid.*
244 *Ibid.*, 251.
245 *Ibid.*
246 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 45.
247 *Ibid.* plate 20.
248 D. Appukuttan Nair, *Nāṭya Gṛha Kerala Kalāmandalam.*
249 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
250 D. Appukuttan Nair also points out that the great temple of Padmanābhasvāmi in Trivandrum has a *naṭakaśāla* for performance of Kathākali and Mohiniyāṭṭam directly facing Viṣṇu as deity. This pattern of theatre before the gods is like that of many temples outside of Kerela, including in Hoysala country.
251 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 64.
252 *Ibid.*, p. 74.
253 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
254 D. Appukkutan Nair, p. 4.
255 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
256 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
257 Clifford Reis Jones, p. 82.
258 H. Sarkar, p. 30.
259 *Ibid.*, p. 79.
260 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 52.
261 H. Sarkar, p. 237.
262 *Ibid.*
263 *Ibid.*, p. 238.
264 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 52.
265 Emily Gilchriest Hatch, p. 150.
266 Stella Kramrisch *et al.*, p. 169.
267 *Ibid.*, p. 137.
268 H. Sarkar, p. 107.
269 V. Nagam Aiya, Volume 1, p. 165.
270 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 42.
271 H. Sarkar, p. 57.
272 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
273 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
274 *Ibid.*, p. 188.
275 *Ibid.*, p. 255.
276 V. Nagam Aiya, p. 165.
277 K. V. Soundara Rajan, p. 45.

Bibliography

Achan, P. Anujan. "The Marriage Scene of Umā as depicted on the Walls of the Mattancheri Palace at Cochin," *The Journal of Indian Studies,* Volume III, Number 1 (June, 1935), pp. 13–14.

Aiya, V. Nagam, *The Travancore State Manual* (3 volumes), Trivandrum, 1906.

Aiyangar, S. Krishnaswami (ed.). *Dravidian Architecture* by G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, Varanasi, 1972.

Anand, Mulk Raj (ed.), *Splendours of Kerala,* Bombay, 1979.

Ayyangar, M. S. Duraswami. "The Architecture of Travancore Temples," *Proceedings and Transactions of the Ninth All-India Oriental Congress,* Trivandrum, 1940, pp. 1093-1108.

Ayyar, A. S. Ramanatha. "Five Inscriptions from Padmanathapuram," *Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume VII, Part 1 (Trivandrum, 1932), pp. 125–129.

Ayyar, K. V. Krishna. *The Zamorins of Calicut,* Calicut, 1938.

———"Guruvayur," *Souvenir—Thirty-seventh Indian History Conference,* Calicut, 1976, pp. 38–41.

Basham, A. L. *The Wonder That Was India,* New York, 1959.

Bernier, Ronald M. "Architectural Developments of Kerala Temples," *Marg,* Volume XXXII, No. 2, pp. 5–36.

———. *The Nepalese Pagoda—Origins and Style,* Delhi, 1979.

———. *Temples of Nepal—An Introductory Survey,* Delhi, 1978.

———. *et al., Splendours of Kerala,* Bombay, 1979.

Brooks, Robert R.R. and Vishnu S. Wakankar, *Stone Age Painting In India,* New Haven, 1976.

Brown, Percy. *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu),* Bombay, 1942.

Bose, Phanindra Nath. *Principles of Indian Silpaśāstra with the Text of Mayaśāstra,* Punjab Oriental (Sanskrit) Series, Volume XI, Lahore, 1926.

Chaitanya, Krishna. *A History of Indian Painting—The Mural Tradition,* New Delhi, 1976.

Champalakshmi, R. "New Light on the Cola Frescoes of Tanjore," *Journal of Indian History Golden Jubilee Volume* (Trivandrum, 1973), pp. 349–359.

Chandran, T. V. R. "The Cheraman Perumal Day," *Travancore and Cochin Information and Listener,* Volume 1, Number 1 (August, 1949), p. 82.

Chitra, V. S. and T. N. Srinivasan, *Cochin Murals,* Ernakulam, 1940.

Chitrodayamanjarī, *Vastuvidyā*, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series Number CXLII, Trivandrum, 1940.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *The Dance of Shiva.* New York, 1957.

Cousins, J. H. "Ancient Frescoes in Travancore—History-making Discovery at Tirunandikkara," *Travancore Information,* Volume I, Number 7 (March, 1941), pp. 13–21.

———. "The Art of Decorations," *Travancore Information and Listener,* Volume VII, Number 2 (October, 1946), pp. 16–18.

Cousins, Kulapati Jayaram. "A Note on Wood-carving," *Travancore Information and Listener,* Volume III, Number 9 (May, 1943), p. 20

Dev, S. Sanjiva. "Madhara Menon," *Silpi* (Madras), Volume 1, Number 10 (May, 1947), pp. 23-26.

Devassy, M. K. (ed.). "Fairs and Festivals of Kerala,"*Census of India 1961,* Volume VII, Part VIIB (i), Delhi, 1966.

———. (ed.). *Selected Crafts of Kerala, Census of India 1961,* Volume VII, Part VIIA, Delhi, 1961.

"Ettumanur," *Travancore Information and Listener,* Volume V, Number 8 (April, 1945), p. 30.

Fergusson, James. *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (2volumes), Second Edition, London, 1910

———. *Tree and Serpent Worship,* Second Edition, London, 1880.

Gopalankutty, K. "Influence of Geography on Kerala History—The Palghat Gap: A Case Study," *Souvenir—Thirty-seventh Indian History Conference,* Calicut, 1976, pp. 21–23.

Hatch, Emily Gilchriest. *Travancore.* Calcutta, 1939.

Imperial Gazetteer of India, New Edition, Volume XVII, Oxford, 1908.

Induchudan, V. T. *The Secret Chamber-A Historical Anthropological and Philosophical Study of Kodungallur Temple,* Trichur, 1969.

Innes, C. S. (F. B. Evans, ed.). *Madras District Gazetteers—Malabar,* Madras, 1951.

"Inscription of the Rock-Cut Cave at Tirunandikkara, " *Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume III, Part II, Number 54, pp. 200-201.

Iyer, K. B. "Shadow Play in Malabar," *Marg,* Volume XXI, Number 3 (June, 1968), pp. 22-26.

Jones , Clifford Reis. *The Temple Theatre of Kerala : Its History and Description,* University of Pennsylvania Ph. D., 1967 (University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan).

Joseph T. K. "A Cave Temple at Trupparappu," *Kerala Society Papers,* Series 1, pp. 50-51.

Koder, S. S. *History of the Jews of Kerala,* Cochin, 1974.

Kramrisch, Stella, J. H. Cousins, and R. Vasudeva Poduval. *The Arts and Crafts of Kerala* (Revised and enlarged edition of *Arts and Crafts of Travancore,* Trivandrum, 1948), Cochin, 1970.

Krishnan, K. G. "Turukkunavāy and the inscription from Alattur," *Journal of Kerala Studies,* Volume I (1973), pp. 27-32.

Logan, William, *Malabar* (3 volumes), Madras, 1951.

Majumdar, N.K. "Sacrificial Altars : Vedis and Agnis," *The Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art,* Volume VII (1939), pp. 39-60.

Mallayya, N. V. "Studies in Sanskrit Texts on Temple Architecture with Special Reference to the Tantrasamuccaya," *Annamalai University Journal,* Volume IX, Number 1 (1940).

Memoir of Travancore Survey, Trivandrum.

Menon, A. Sreedhara. *Cultural Heritage of Kerala—An Introduction,* Cochin, 1978.

A Survey of Kerala History, Kottayam, 1967.

(ed.). *Kerala District Gazetteers,* Trivandrum, 1962-1975.

Menon C. Achyuta. "A Note on Kali or Bhagavati Cult of Kerala," *S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar Commemoration Volume,* Madras, 1936, pp. 234-238.

Menon, K. P. Padmanabha. *History of Kerala Written in Form of Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar* (4 volumes), Ernakulam, 1937.

Menon, K. Parameswara. "A Study in Kerala Style Temple Architecture," *Travancore Information and Listener,* Volume VIII, Number 5 (January, 1948), pp. 31-34.

Menon, V. K. R. "Kerala Paintings," *Bulletin of the Sri Rama Varma Research Institute,* Volume V, Part II (July, 1937), pp. 75-82.

Nair, D. Appukuttan. *Nātya Gṛha Kerala Kalāmandalam—1st October 1977,* Trivandrum, 1977.

Nair, P. Thankappan. "Tree Symbol Worship Among Nairs of Kerala" in Sankar Sen Gupta (ed.), *Tree Symbol Worship in India,* Calcutta, 1965, pp. 93-103.

Nair, R. P. "Gajendramoksha—Two Treasures of the Wood-carver's Art," *Travancore Information and Listener,* Volume VIII, Number 12 (August, 1948), pp. 36-39.

Nair, U. Balakrishnan. "The Varakkal Temple and Its Festival," *The Indian Antiquary,* Volume XXVI (1897), p. 342.

Nambyar, V. Raghavan. Annals and Antiquities of Tiruvalla," *Kerala Society Papers,* Series 2, p. 68.

Narayan, M. G. S. *Political and Social Conditions in Kerala Under the Kulaśekhara Empire (c. 800 A. D. to 1124 A. D.),* University of Kerala Ph.D., 1972.

Padmanabhan, S. *Temples of South India,* Nagercoil, 1977.

Paramasivan, S. "An Investigation into the Methods of the Mural Paintings—A. In Cochin and Travancore," *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art,* Volume VII (1939), pp. 18-38.

Parekh, Jayantilal T. "The Technique of Mural Paintings," *Silpi* (Madras), Volume, 1, Number 2 (June, 1947), pp. 28-32.

Periplus of the Erythraean Sea-Travel and Trade in the Indian Ocean by a Merchant of the First Century, translated from the Greek and annotated by Wilfred H. Schoff, New York, 1912.

Pillai, Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan. *Studies in Kerala History,* Kottayam, 1970.

Pillai , Govinda Krishna. *The Way of the Silpis or Hindu Approach to Art and Science,* Allahabad, 1948.

Pillai , K. Raghavan. "The Influence of Sanskrit on Malayalam," *Commemoration Volume—Cochin Synagogue Quatercenary Celebrations,* Cochin, 1968, pp. 143–150.

——— (ed.). *Musikavamśa of Atula, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,* Number 246, Trivandrum. 1977 (translated by N. P. Unni)

Pillai, Sadasyatilaka T. K. Velu (ed.), *Travancore State Manual,* 4 volumes, Trivandrum, 1906.

Pisharoti, K. R. "Srîmūlasthānam," *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art,* Volume IX (1941), pp. 149–150.

Poduval, R. Vasudeva. *A Short Guide to Padmanabhapuram.* Trivandrum, 1941.

———. *Travancore Inscriptions,* Trivandrum. 1941.

Prasâdamâlâ, Setu Lakshmî. *The Silparatna of Srî Kumâra,* Part II (K. Sāmbaśiva Sāstri, ed.), *Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,* Number XCVIII, Trivandrum, 1929.

Rajan, K. V. Soundara. *Temple Architecture in Kerala,* Trivandrum, 1974.

Rao, T.A. Gopinatha. "Jaina and Bauddha Vestiges in Travancore," *Travancore Archaeological Series,* Volume II, Part 2 (Madras, 1916), pp. 114–130.

Rowland, Benjamin *The Art and Architecture of India—Buddhist, Hindu, Jain,* Baltimore, 1970.

Sarkar, H. *An Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala,* New Delhi, 1978.

Sāstrî, K. Sāmbaśiva (ed.). *The Silparatna of Sri Kumara, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series* Number XCVIII, Trivandrum, 1929.

Sastri . N. Subrahmania. "An Analysis of Bhakti," *Journal of Sri Venkatesvara Oriental Institute,* Volume IX (1950), pp. 168–181.

Sâstrî, T. Ganapati (ed.). *The Manushyâlayachandrikâ, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,* Number LVI, Trivandrum, 1917.

———. *The Silparatna by Srî Kumāra, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,* Number LXXV, Trivandrum, 1922.

———. *Tantrasamuchchaya of Nārāyana with the Commentary Vimarsinî of Sankara edited by Mahamahopadhyaya, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,* Number LXVII, Trivandrum, 1919.

Sewell, Robert. *The Historical Inscriptions of Southern India (collected till 1923) and Outlines of Political History,* Madras, 1932.

Spink, Walter. *Krishnamandala.* Ann Arbor, 1971.

Tampi S. P. and Ronald M. Bernier, "Prehistoric Paintings Found in South India," *Archaeology,* Volume 32, Number 1 (January/February 1979), p. 66.

Thampuran, H. H. Kerala Varma. "Kāli Cult in Kerala," *Bulletin of the Sri Rama Varma Research Institute,* Volume IV (1936), pp. 77–97.

Thurston, Edgar. "Wood-carving in Southern India," *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry,* Volume X, Number 86 (April, 1904), pp. 43–50.

"What is M. E.," *Travancore Information and Listener,* Volume III, Number 12 (August, 1943), pp. 31–32.

Zimmer, Heinrich. *The Art of Indian Asia* (3 volumes), New York, 1960.

Glossary

adisthāna : base, excluding *upapitha,* of a structure.
āditala :ground floor of a temple.
alpa-vimāna : small temple of one storey.
ambalam : temple (Malayalam)
ambu-mārga : channel that drains liquid out of a temple
āntara-bhitti : wall inside an ambulatory temple.
ardha-maṇḍapa : structure that stands just before a *sanctum sanctorum.*
balikkal-maṇḍapa : hall with pillars that is an optional structure over a *balipitha.*
balipitha : stone platform to receive offerings.
bhitti : wall.
bhuta : dwarf.
chaturmukha : temple with four openings.
deva-koṣṭha : niche on a shrine wall that may hold an image of a god.
dipa-mādam : structure holding lamps.
dipa-stambha : pillar supporting lamp.
dhvaja-stambha : flagstaff.
dvārapāla : door guardian.
dvitala-vimāna : temple of two storeys.
garbha-gṛha : shrine interior, holy of holies.
gavakṣa : pierced window.
ghana-dvāra : false door.
go-mukha : *praṇāla* end in the shape of a cow's mouth.
gopura : gateway with tower.
griva-koṣṭha : niche to enshrine a deity beneath a temple roof at "clerestory" level.
hāra : "garland" or row of miniature shrine niches over each terrace level of a temple exterior.
hārantara : intervening spaces between shrine niches.
jāla (jāli; jyāli, jālaka) : perforated or crosswork pattern of window, wall, and niche
kalaśa : finial over spire of temple, vase-shaped.
kapota : "pigeon," overhanging cornice.
kavu : serpent grove.
kumunda : moulding of the *adhiṣṭhāna* that separates a temple from other structures, taking many forms.
kūttambalam : temple theatre (Malayalam).
lalāta-bimba : element in the middle of a door lintel, usually presenting a divine form.
lupā : rafter of ceiling.
mahā-maṇḍapa : large hall that precedes an *ardha-maṇḍapa.*
makara-torana : garland or scroll form that joins two columns at the top.
maṇḍapa : open or closed hall with pillars.
mithuna : loving couple.
mukha-maṇḍapa : hall with pillars at a temple entrance.
nāga : sacred serpent.
nālambalam : cloister around the main shrine.
nālukaṭṭu : house with four wings around a courtyard.
namaskāra-mandapa : separate hall with pillars in front of a shrine.
nāsikā : "nose," an arched opening on a temple surface.
nirandhāra : temple that lacks an ambulatory within.
pāda : pillar, pilaster, *stambha.*
pancha-prākāra . five successive enclosures.
piṭha : pedestal or platform, such as *liṅga-pītha.*
pradakṣiṇā-patha : path for circumambulation.
prākāra : wall enclosure.
praṇāla : drain from temple interior.
prastara : entablature of many mouldings over a wall or pillars.
sāndhāra : temple containing an ambulatory.
sarvatobhadra : temple having four openings to the cardinal directions.
śikhara : root over a *vimāna.*
siṁha-mukha : lion's mouth form that holds a *praṇāla*
sopāna : flight of steps.
srikovil : main shrine structure.
stambha : pillar, *pāda.*
sthapati : architect.
stūpi, stūpikā ; finial atop a *vimāna* or *gopura.*
tala : storey of a *gopura* or temple.
upapiṭha : sub-base below the *adhiṣṭhana,* lowermost temple member.
vāstu-śāstra : science of architecture.
vedikā, vedi : "railing" member between *adhiṣṭhāna* and *bhitti*
vimāna : full temple form from *adhiṣṭhāna* to *stupi.*
vyāla-mālā : leonine *vyāla* frieze, also called *simha-mālā.*

Index

FIGURE 1—Distribution of Cave-Temples.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

FIGURE 2—The early structural temple at Vilinjam, Trivandrum District.

Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

SIDE ELEVATION

FRONT ELEVATION

SECTION ON A-A

VILINJAM: ŚIVA TEMPLE

DISTRICT TRIVANDRUM

SCALE OF METRES

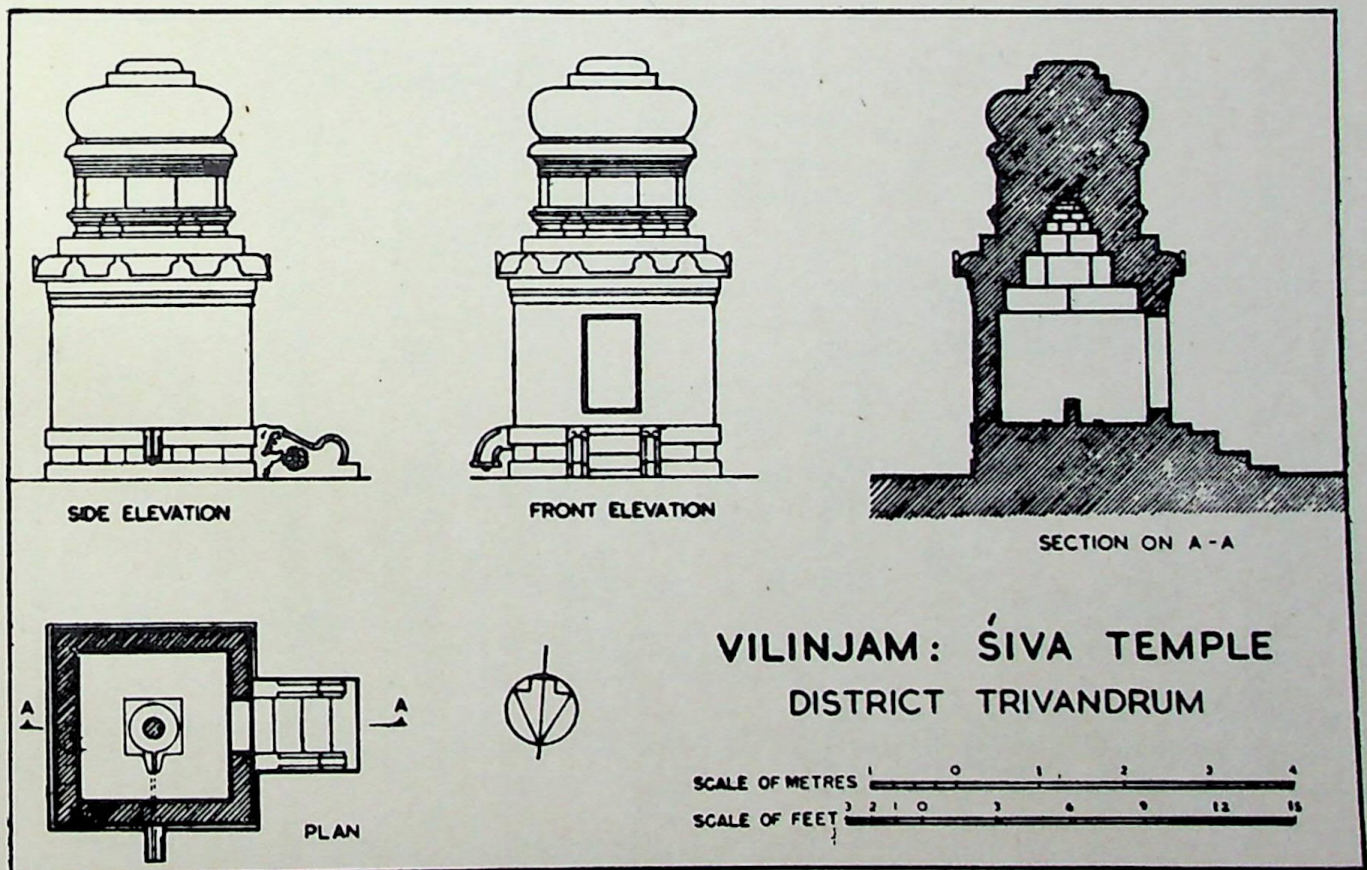
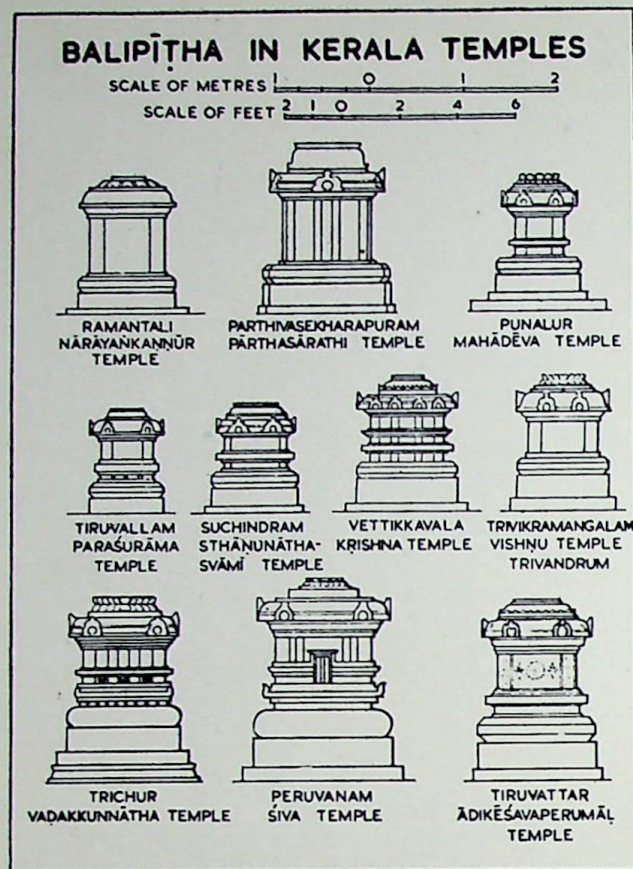
SCALE OF FEET

PLAN

FIGURE 3—*Balipīṭha* forms in Kerala.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

FIGURE 4—Plan of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

TRICCHAMBARAM : KṚISHṆA TEMPLE
DISTRICT CANNANORE
SCALE OF METRES: 1 0 1 2 3 4
SCALE OF FEET: 3 0 3 6 9 12 15

FIGURE 5—Developed temple plan

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

FIGURE 6—Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

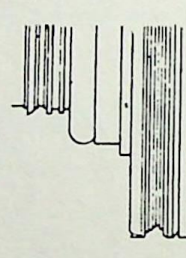



FIGURE 7—A *sopāna* balustrade carving from northern Kerala, Calicut Museum.

FIGURE 8 —Early and Middle Phase *srikovil* base design.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

FIGURE 9 —Circular and Elliptical temple distribution

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

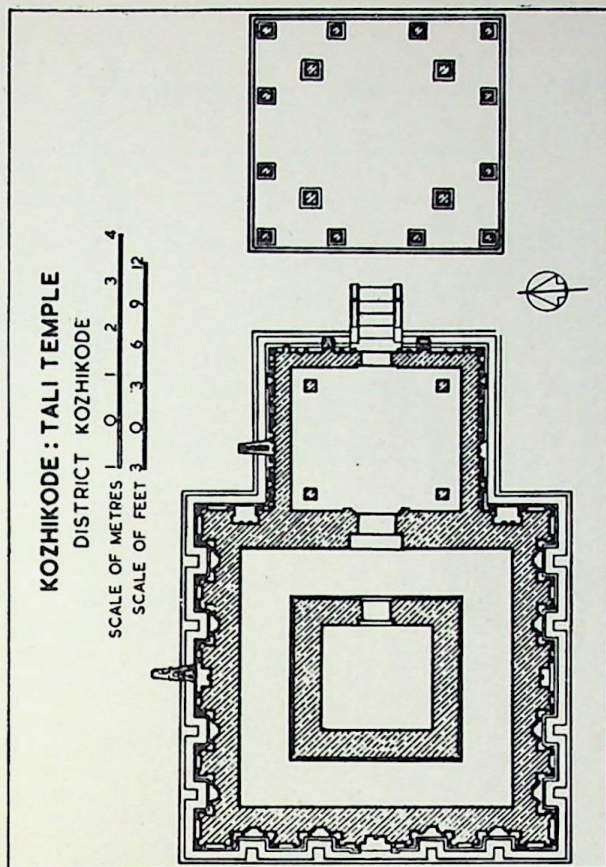
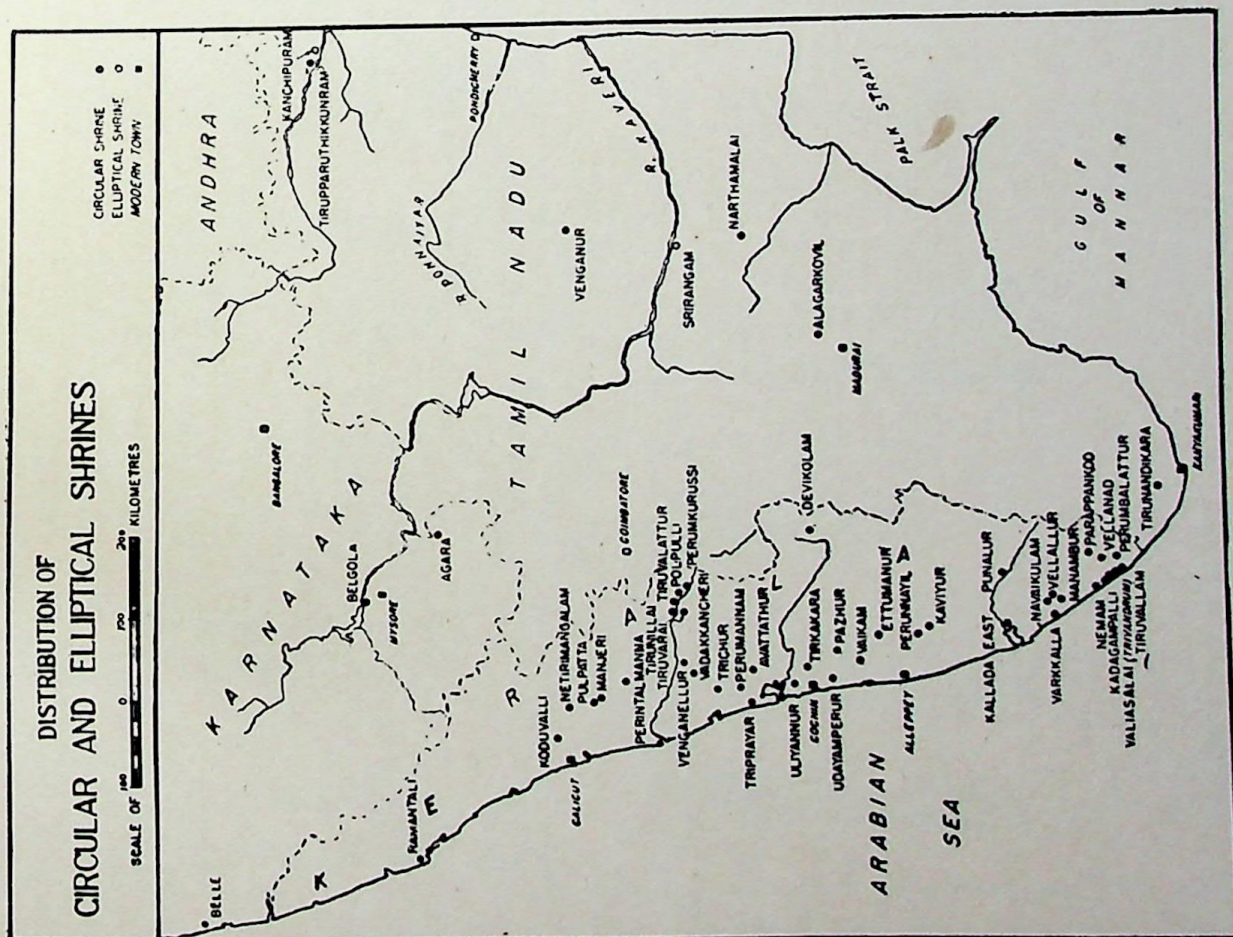



FIGURE 10—Plan of the Tali temple in Calicut, Kozhikode District.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

TYPES OF NICHES : KERALA

METRES 0

FEET 0 1 2 3 4

UDAYANAPURAM
SUBRAHMAṆYA TEMPLE

PODIYAL
KṚISHNA TEMPLE

THIRUVANCHIKULAM
ŚIVA TEMPLE

PERUVANAM
MĀḌATTILAPPAṆ

MANIYUR
SUBRAHMAṆYA TEMPLE

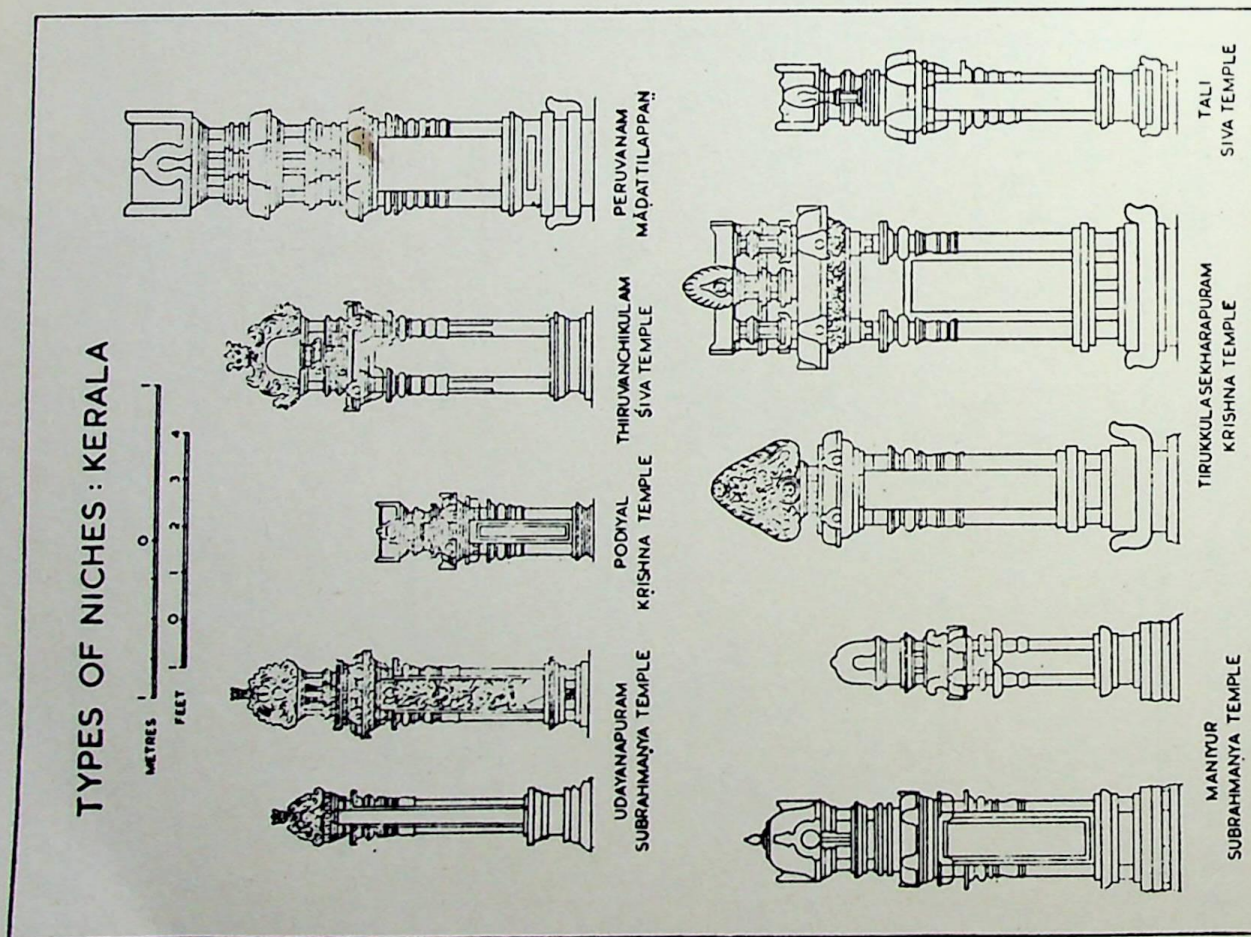
TIRUKKULASEKHARAPURAM
KRISHNA TEMPLE

TALI
SIVA TEMPLE

FIGURE 11—Types of niches in Kerala

(Copyright Archaeological Sruvey of India)

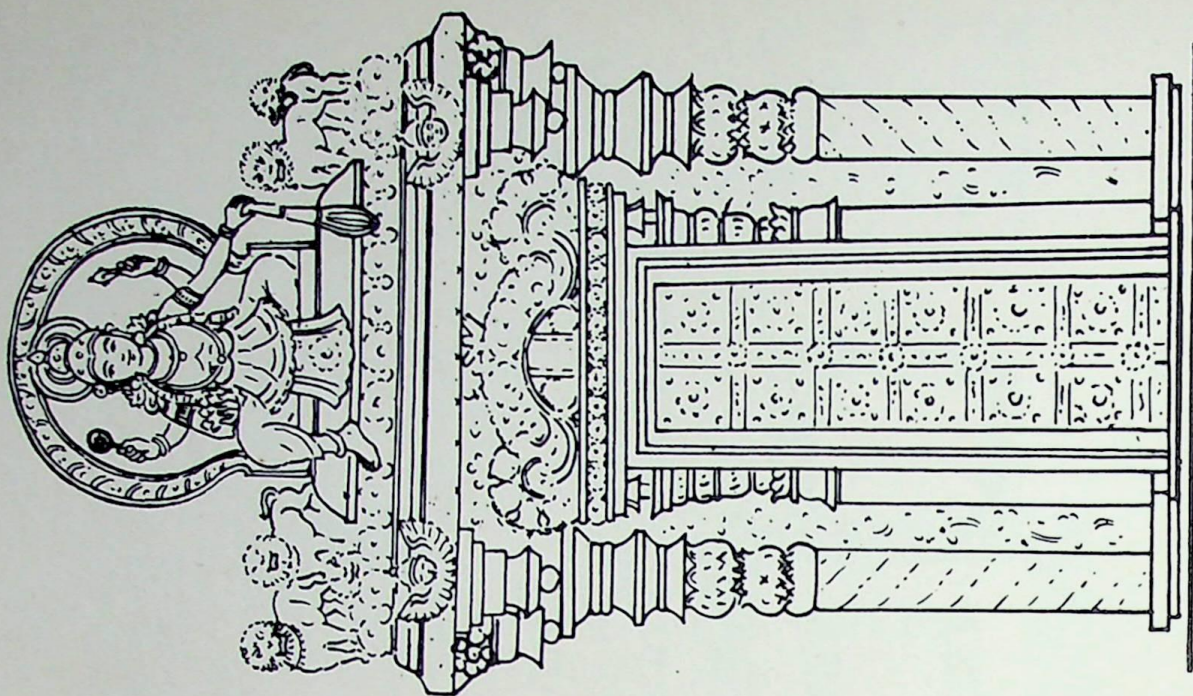



FIGURE 12—False door with Viṣṇu in *toraṇa* placement, Tali temple, Calicut, Kozhikode District.

TYPES OF PRAṆĀLA : KERALA

SCALE OF METRES 0

SCALE OF FEET 0 1 2 3

PODIYAL KRISHṆA TEMPLE

ERAMAM CHĀLAPPURATTU AMBALAM

KANNAPURAM KURUVAKKĀVA TEMPLE

KANDIYUR ŚIVA TEMPLE

PULPATTA ŚIVA TEMPLE

KAVIYUR ŚIVA TEMPLE

PUNALUR TRIKŌTĒŚVARA MAHĀDĒVA TEMPLE

TRIKKANDIYUR ŚIVA TEMPLE

MANIYUR SUBRAHMANYA TEMPLE

NEMAM NIRAMAṄKARA TEMPLE

CHENGANNUR MAHĀDĒVA TEMPLE

ETTUMANUR ŚIVA TEMPLE

QUILON RĀMĒŚVARA TEMPLE

UDAYANAPURAM SUBRAHMANYA TEMPLE

FIGURE 13 — *Praṇāla* types in Kerala

(Copyright Archaeological Sruvey of India)

FIGURE 14 — Wooden figure of Viṣṇu (height ca. 4 ft.) at *srikovil* entrance, Ponmeri Śiva temple, Kozhikode District.

FIGURE 15—Balustrade carving, Tali temple, Calicut, Kozhikode District.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

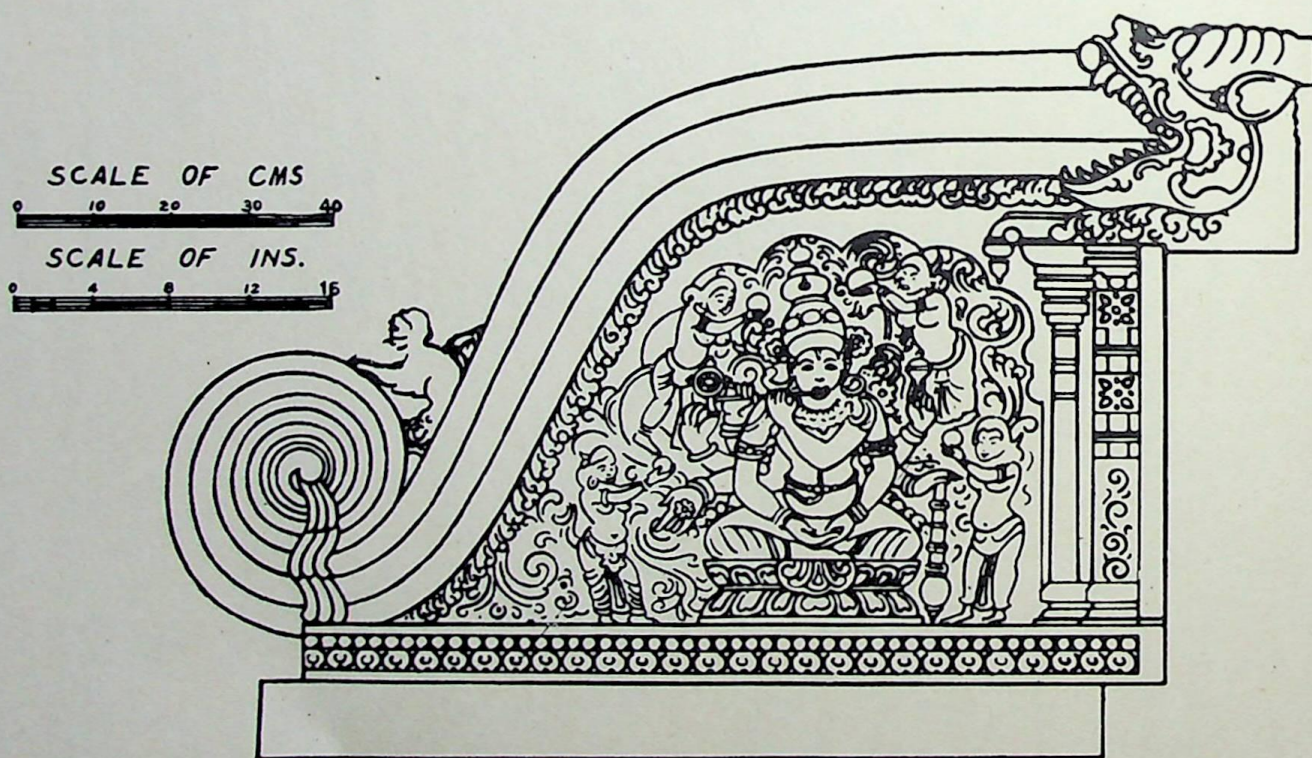



FIGURE 16—Balustrade carving, Tali temple, Calicut, Kozhikode District.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

MANJERI, KARIKKAD KSHETRAM : ŚĀSTĀ TEMPLE
DISTRICT MALAPPURAM
SCALE OF METRES : 1 0 1 2
SCALE OF FEET : 3 0 3 6 9

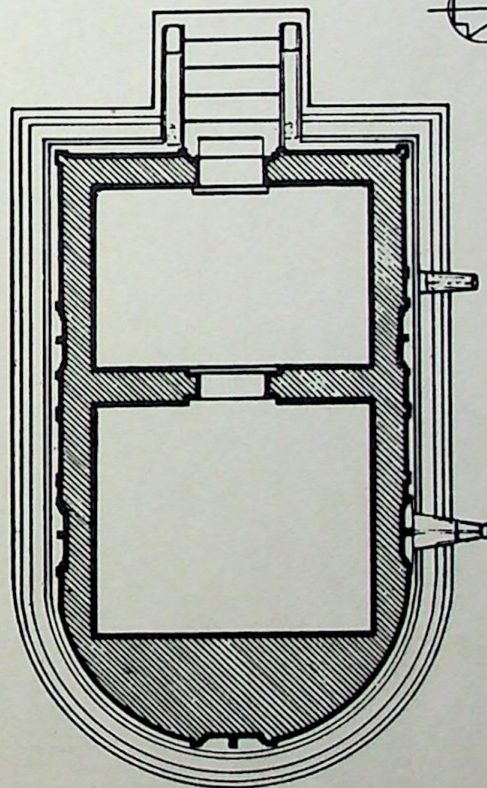



FIGURE 17—Plan of Karikkad Kṣetram, Malappuram District.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

SIVA TEMPLE
TRIKKANDIYUR
(MALAPPURAM DIST.)
PLAN
SCALE OF METRES
FEET

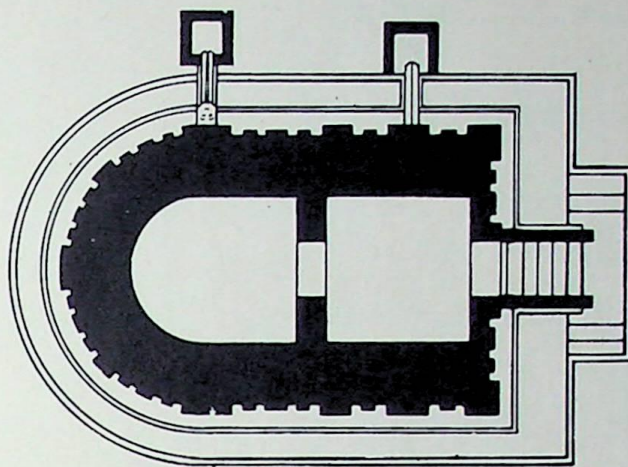



FIGURE 18—Plan of Trikandiyur Śiva temple, Malappuram District.
(Copyright Government of Kerala)

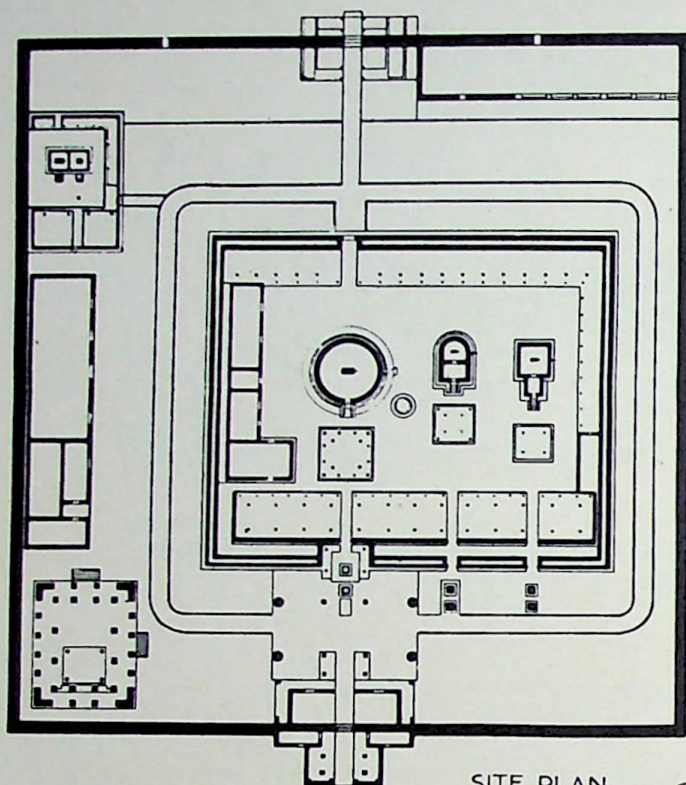



FIGURE 19—Plan of Tiruvegappura Śaṅkaranārāyana temple.
(Copyright Government of Kerala)

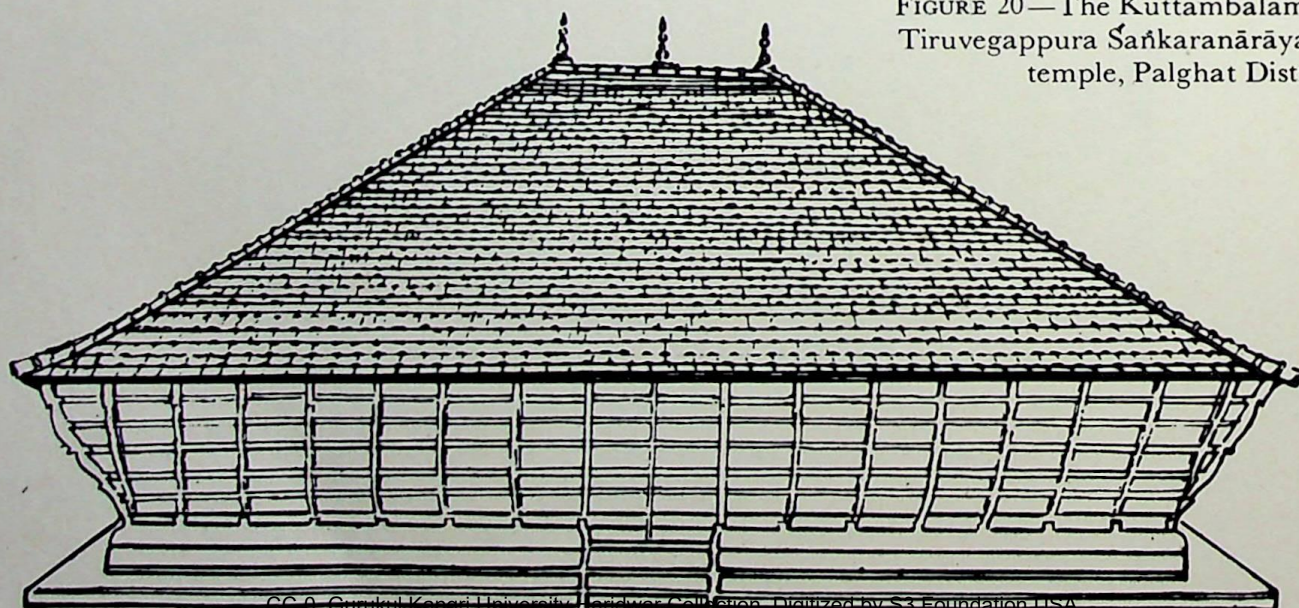



FIGURE 20—The Kūttambalam of Tiruvegappura Śaṅkaranārāyana temple, Palghat District

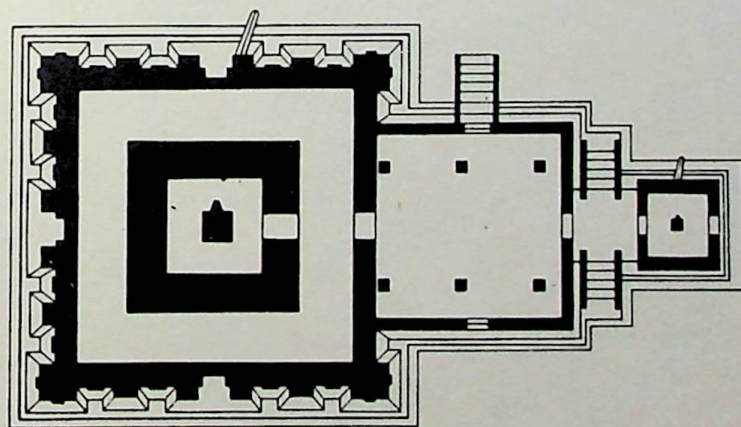



FIGURE 21—Plan of Tirukkulaśekharapuram, Trichur District.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

SRI KRISHNA TEMPLE
TIRUKKULASEKHARAPURAM
(TRICHUR DIST.)
SCALE OF CMS.
SCALE OF INS

SRI KRISHNA TEMPLE
TIRUKKULASEKHARAPURAM
(TRICHUR DIST.)
SCALE OF CMS.
SCALE OF INS.

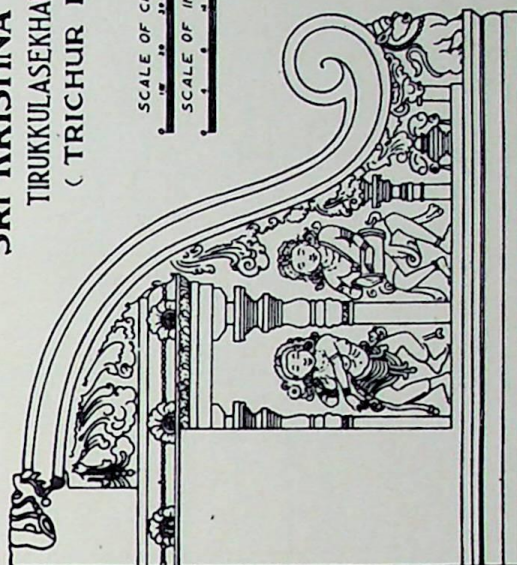



FIGURE 22—Balustrade carvings at the temple of Tirukkulaśekharapuram, Trichur District.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

VAIKAM : ŚIVA TEMPLE

DISTRICT KOTTAYAM

SCALE OF METRES 1 0 1 2 3 4 5

SCALE OF FEET 5 0 5 10 15

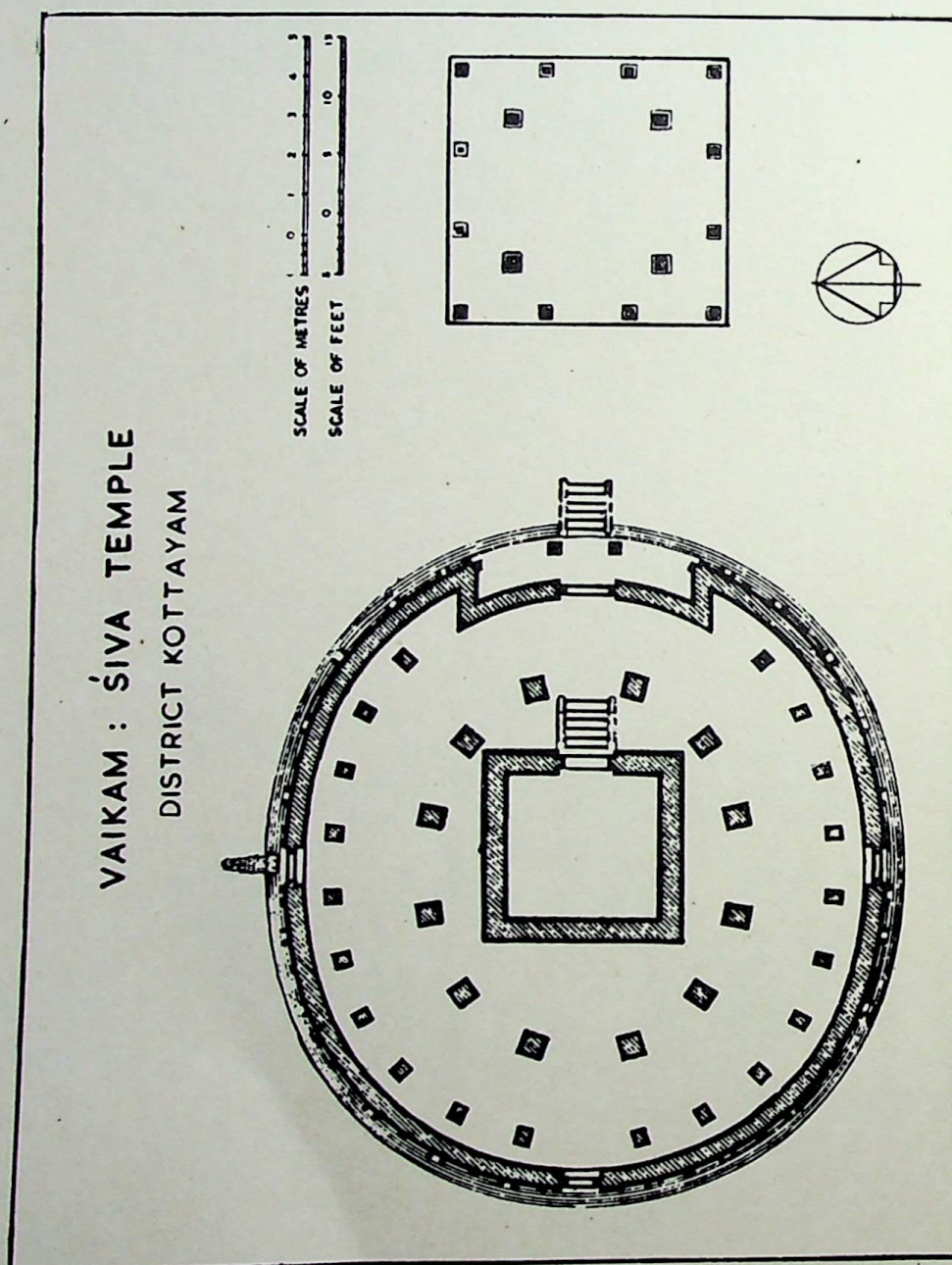



FIGURE 23—Elliptical plan of the Vaikom Siva temple, Kottayam District.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India

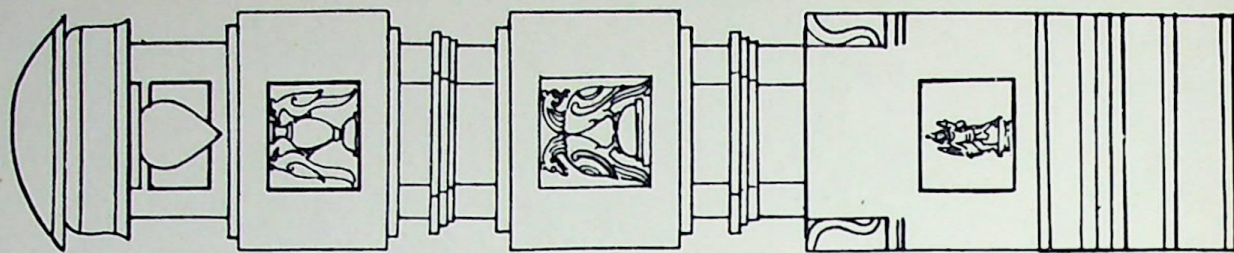



FIGURE 24—Column design of the *mandapa* approach at Vaikom, Kottayam District.

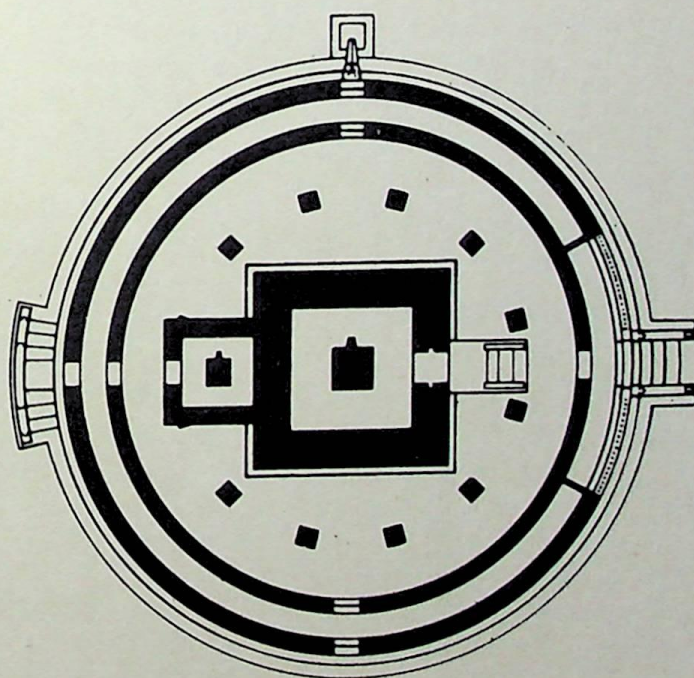



FIGURE 25—Plan of Sri Mahādeva temple, Kaviyur, Alleppey District.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

FIGURE 26—Section, Elevation, and Plan of Sri Vallabha at Tiruvalla, Alleppey District.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

SRI VALLABHA TEMPLE
TIRUVALLA
(ALLEPPEY DIST.)

ELEVATION

PLAN

SCALE OF METRES
FEET

FIGURE 28—Plan of the Narasiṃha temple at Chengannur, Alleppey District.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

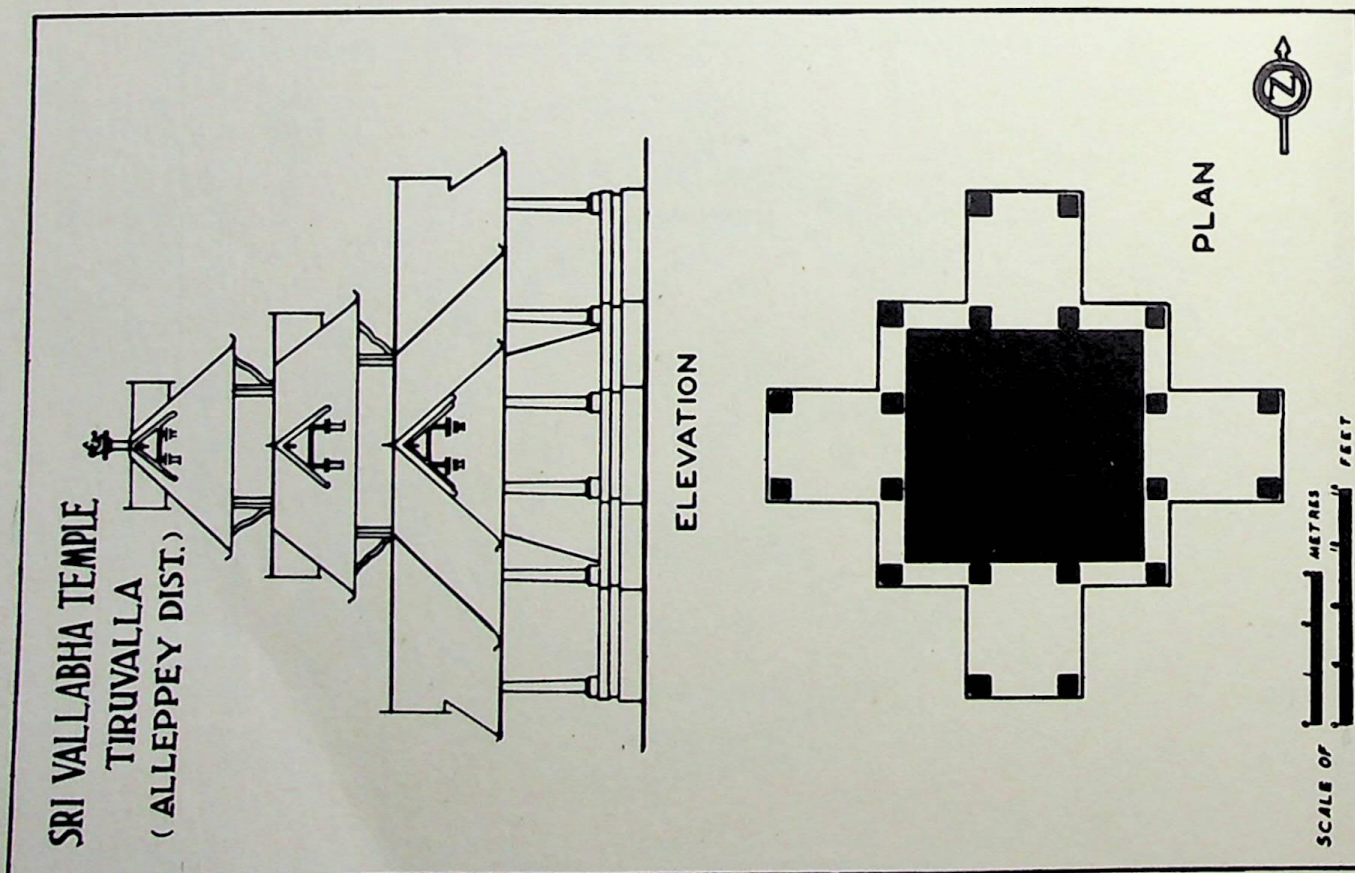



FIGURE 27—Elevation and Plan of the *gopuradvāra*, Sri Vallabha, Tiruvalla, Alleppey District.
(Copyright Government of Kerala)

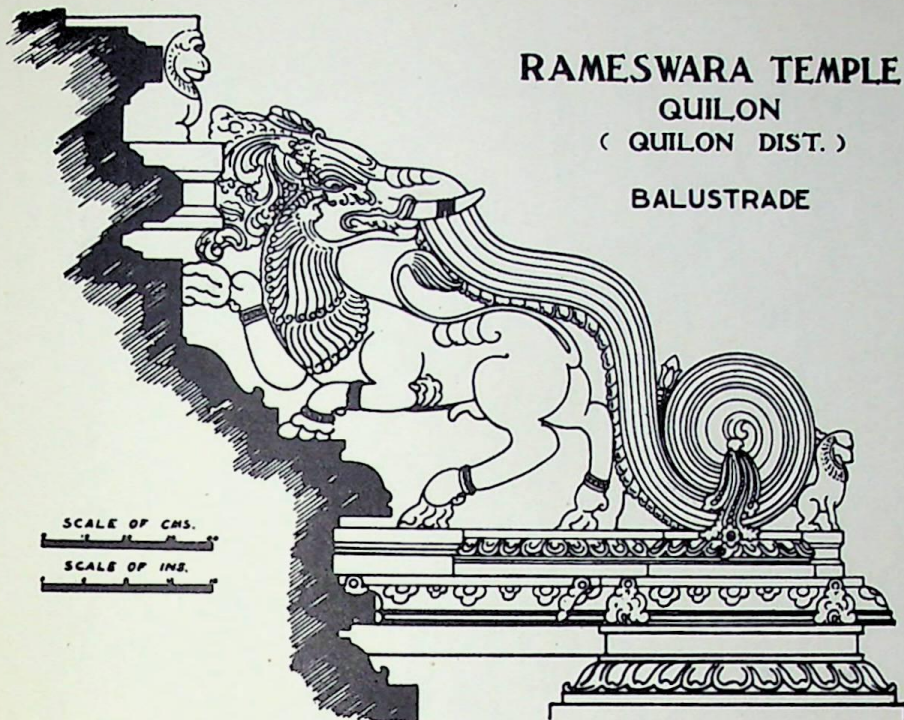



FIGURE 29—*Sopāna* sculpture at Rameśvara temple, Quilon District.
(Copyright Government of Kerala)

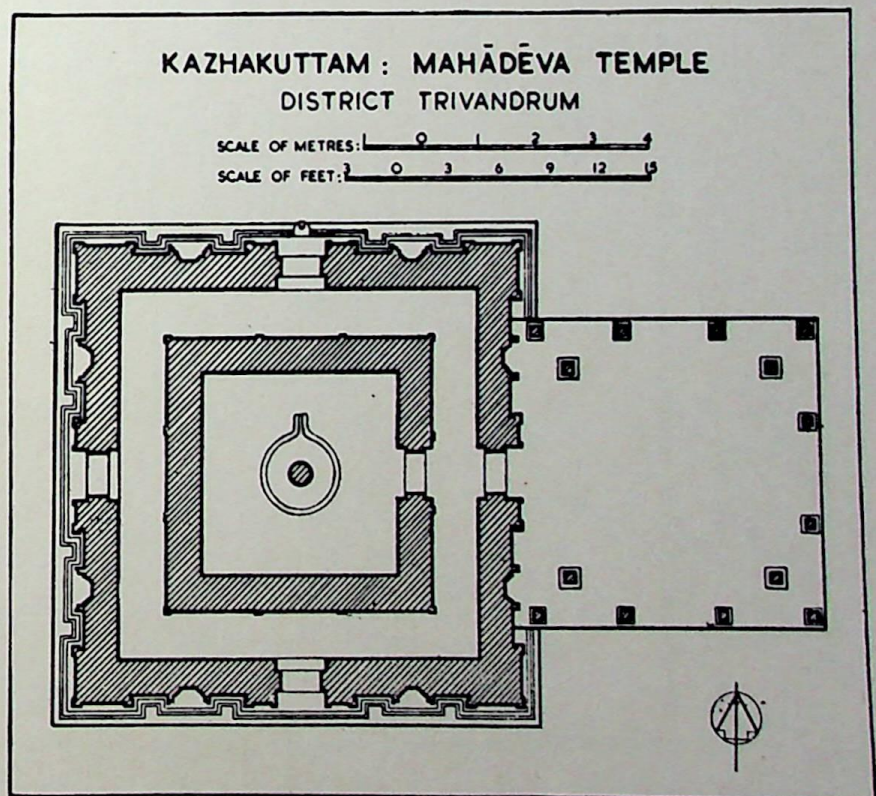



FIGURE 30—Plan of Śrī Mahādeva temple at Kazhakuttam, Trivandrum District.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

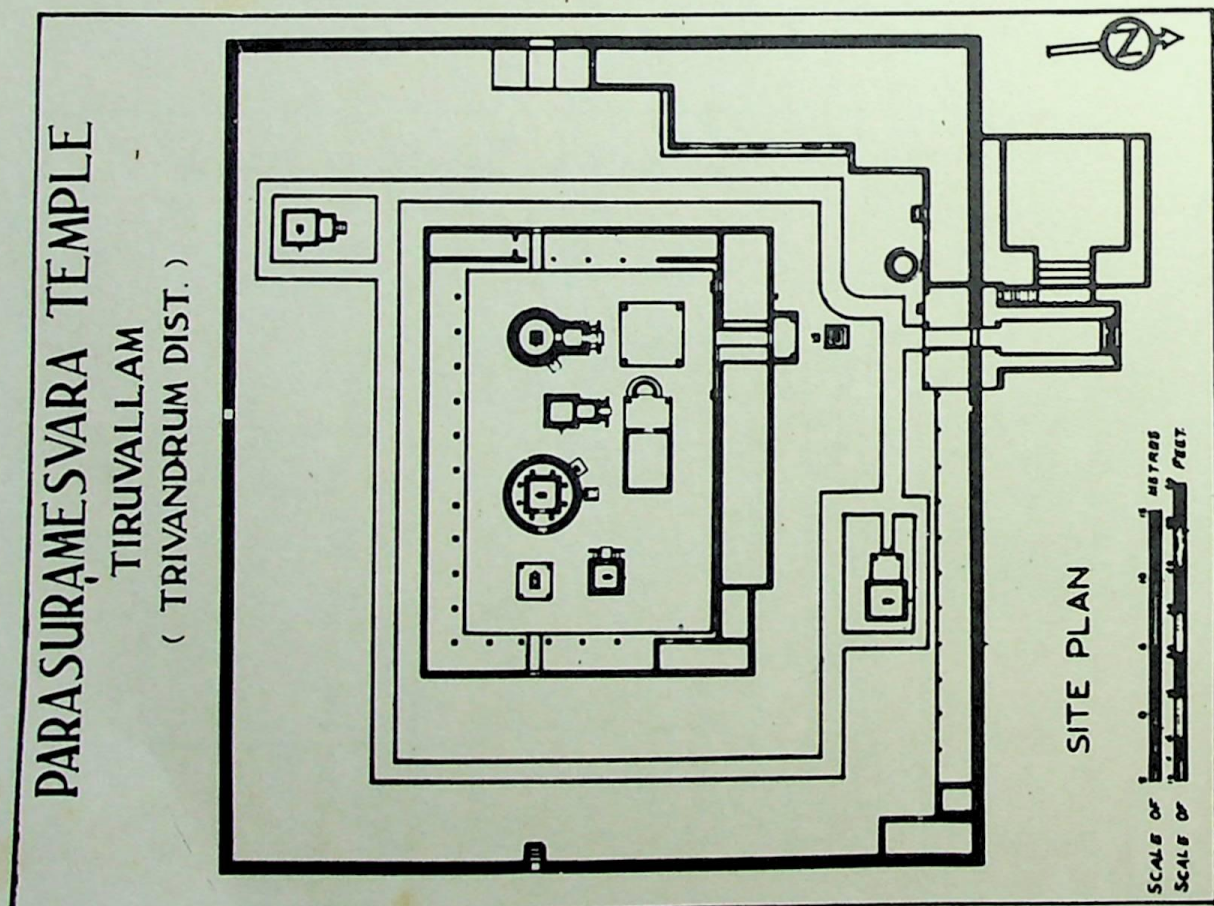



FIGURE 31—Plan of Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Tiruvallam, Trivandrum District.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

SRI NARAYANA TEMPLE
TIRUNARAYANAPURAM
(TRIVANDRUM DIST.)
SCALE OF METRES
SCALE OF FEET
ELEVATION
PLAN
N

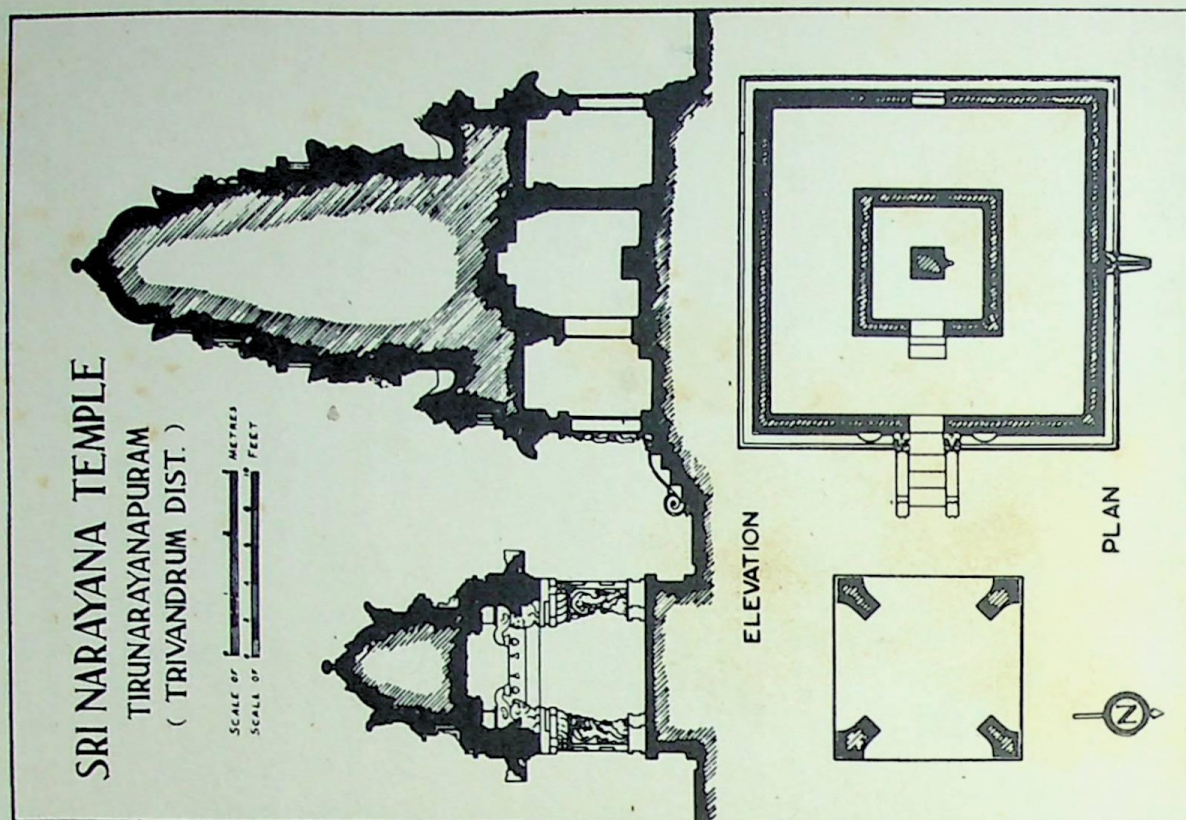
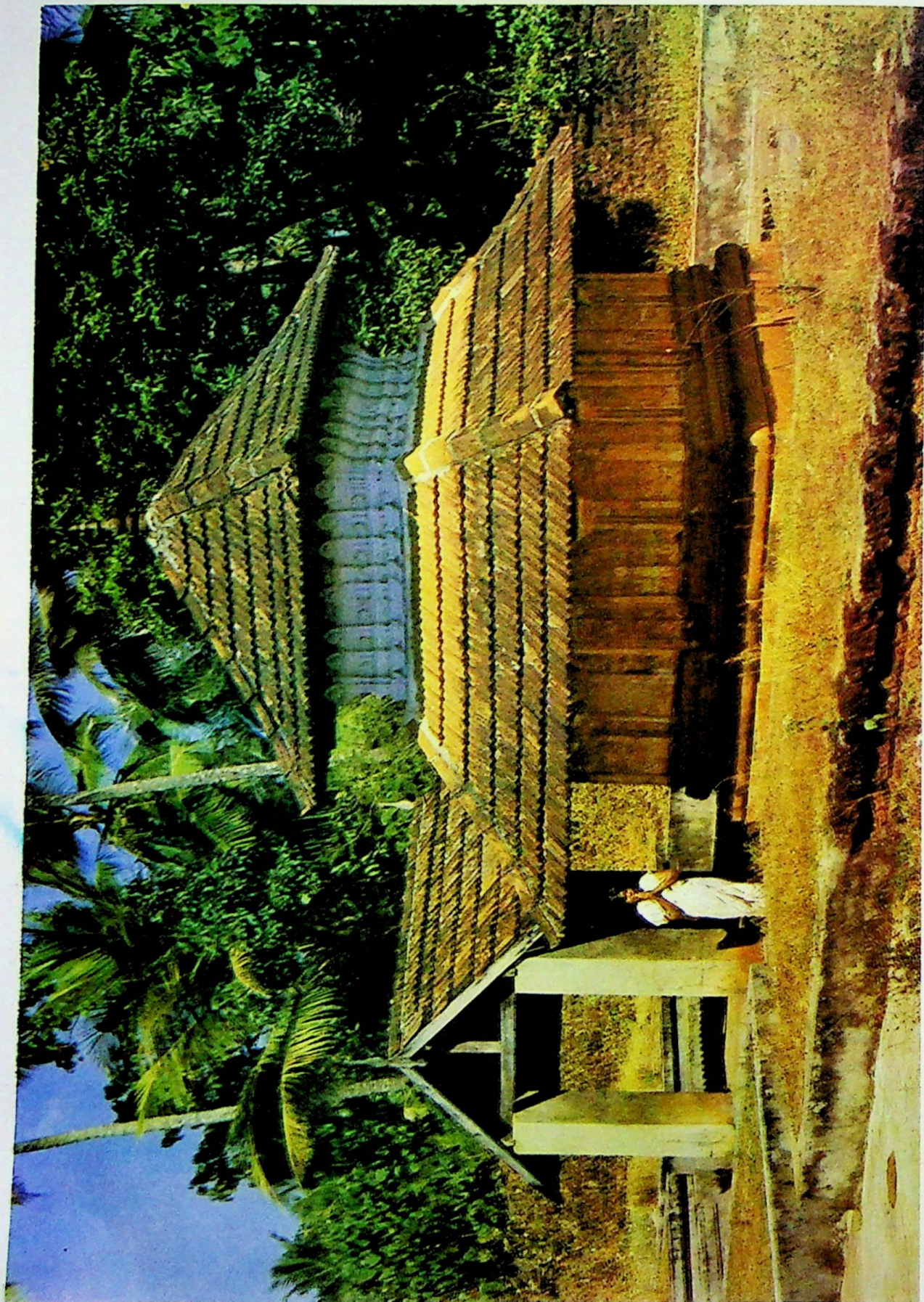
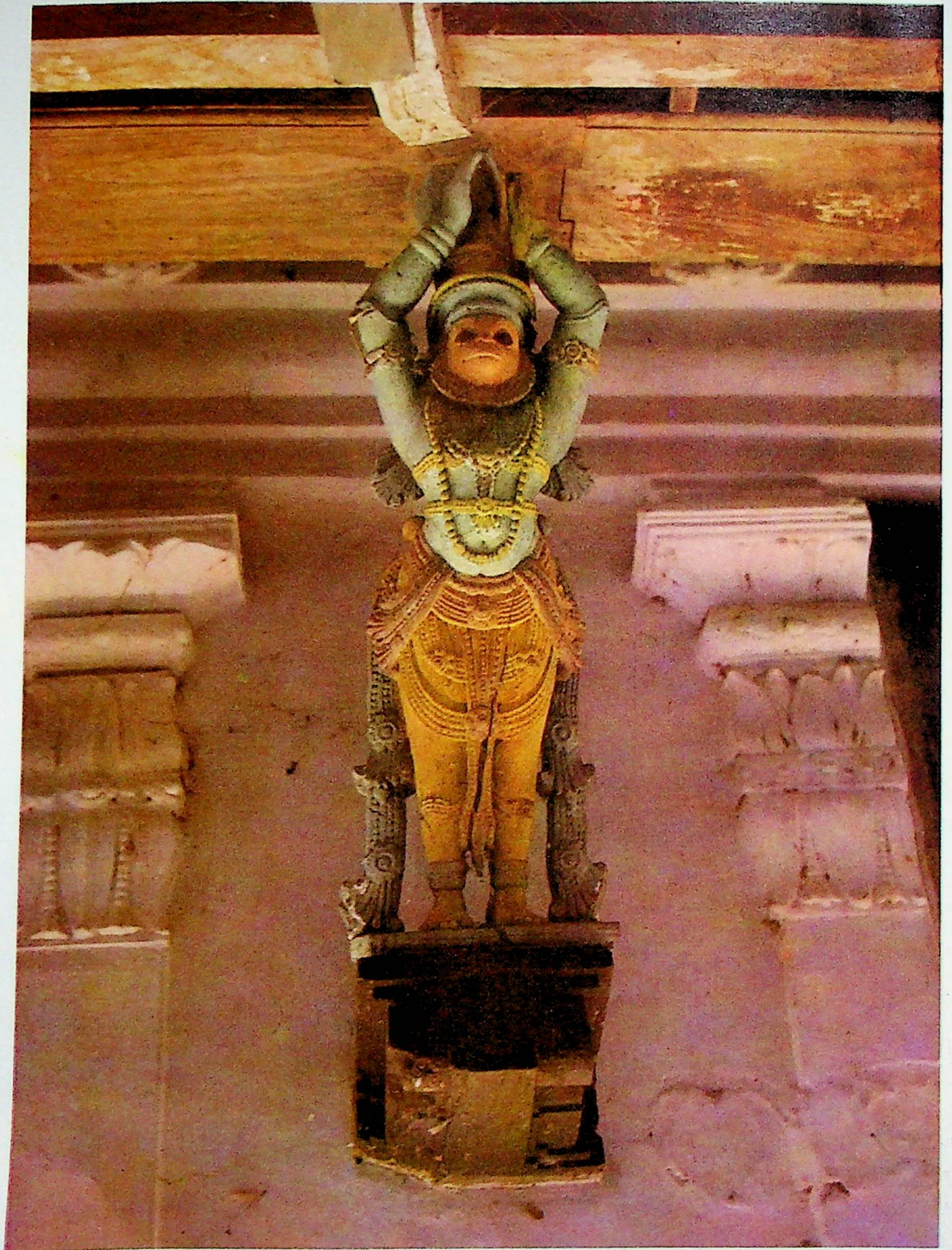
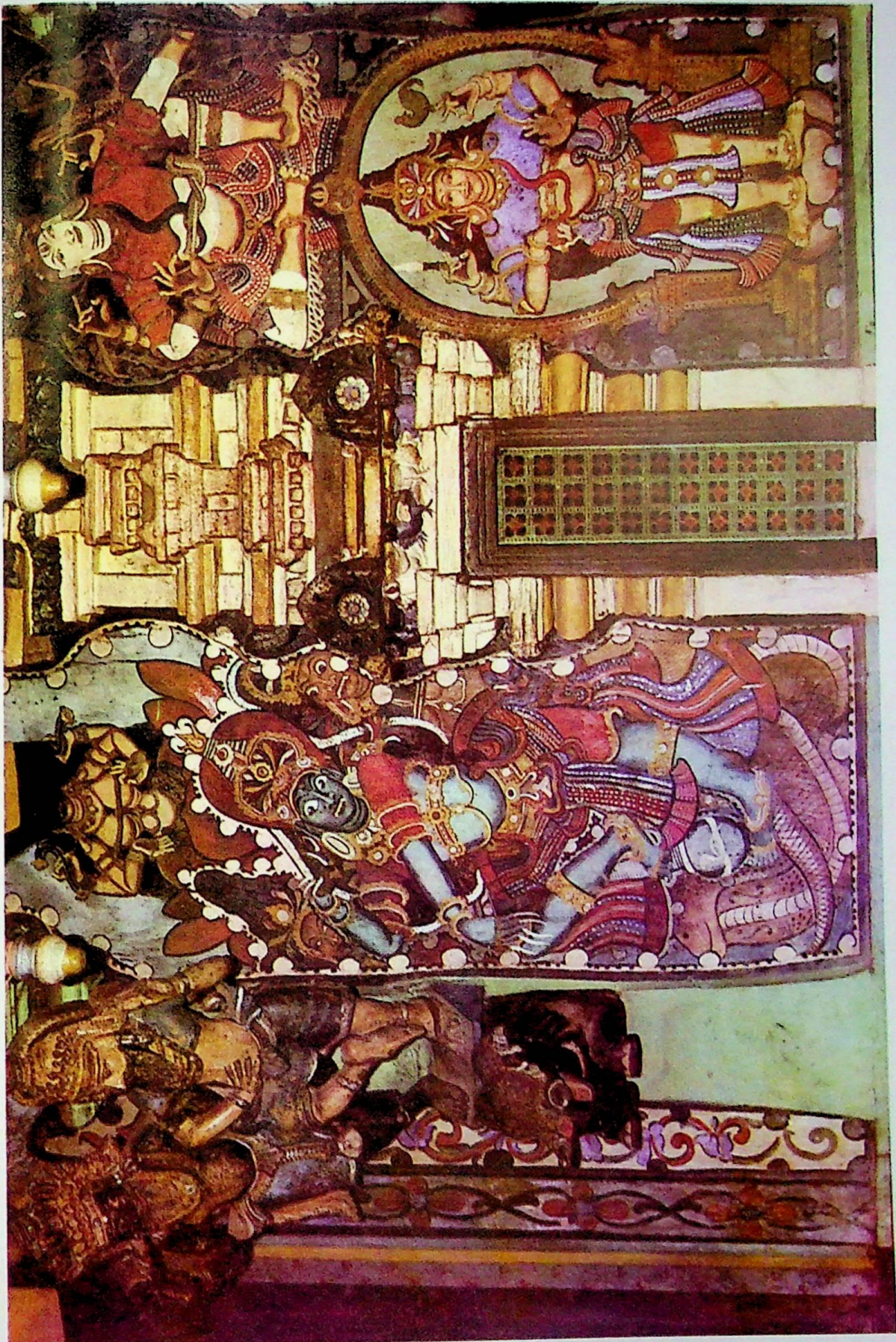
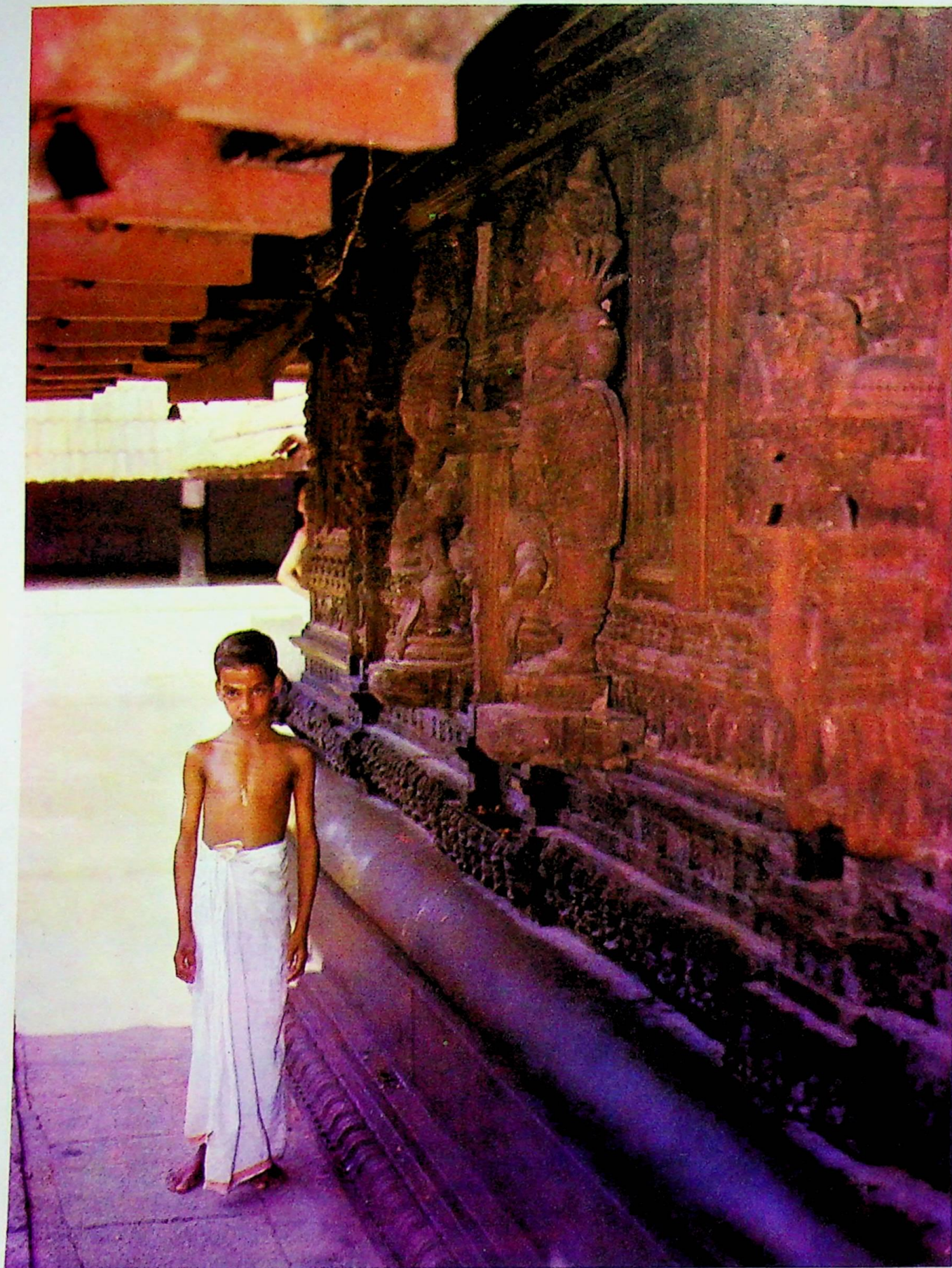



FIGURE 32—Thirunārāyaṇappuram temple, Trivandrum District, Elevation and Plan.

(Copyright Government of Kerala)

Color Plate 1—Entrance to Kaviyur temple cloister, Alleppey District.

Color Plate 2—Karanathil Śiva shrine on grounds of Triprangode Śiva temple, Malappuram District.

Color Plate 3—Kathākali dancers, Cochin.

Color Plate 4—Sukapuram Dakṣiṇamūrti Hanumant bracket figure, Malappuram District.

Color Plate 5—Murals on the elliptical *srikovil,* Vaikom Śiva temple, Kottayam District.

Color Plate 6—*Srıkovil* wall, Pulliyur Narasiṃha temple, Alleppey District.

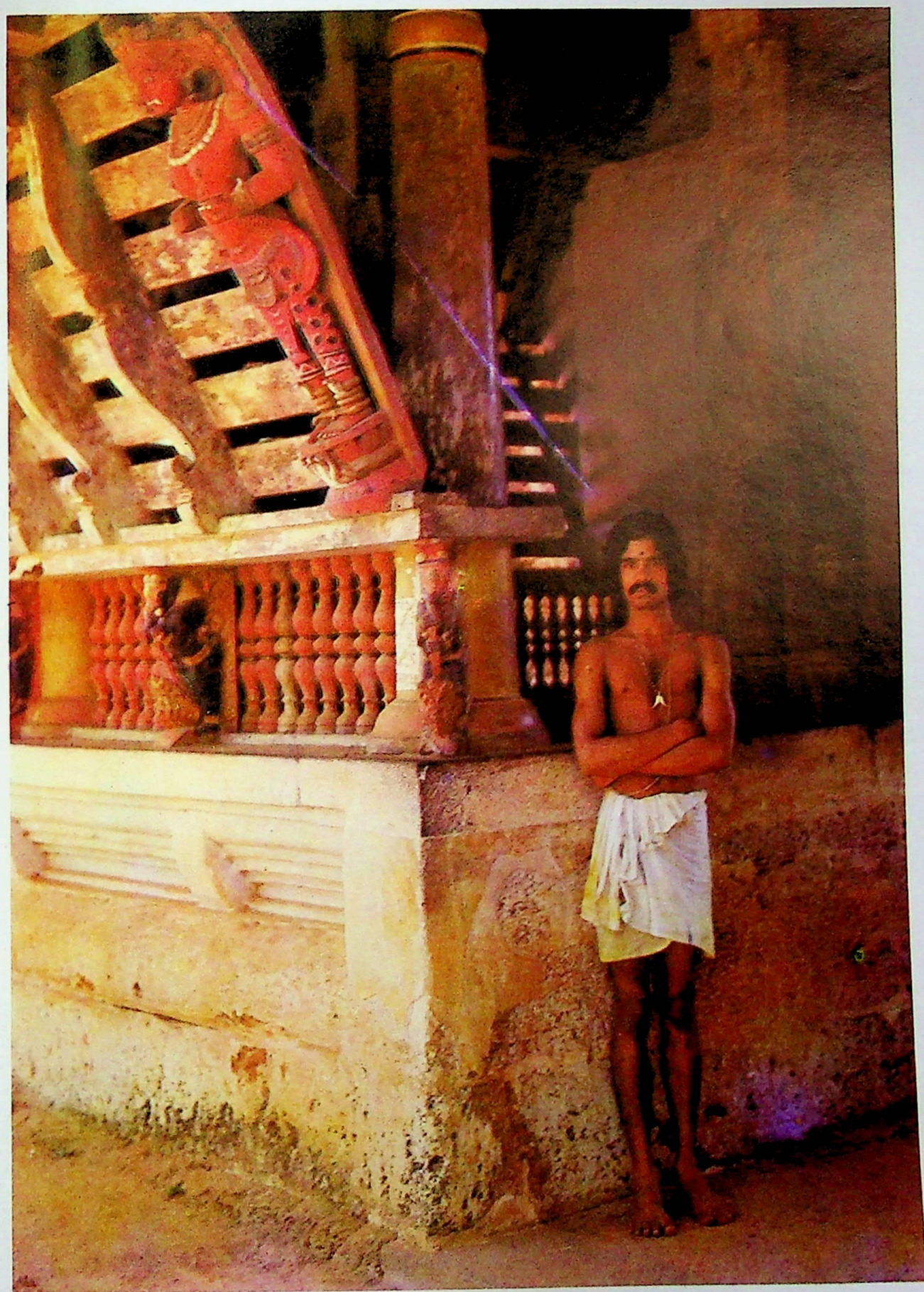
Color Plate 7—Sri Valayanadu Kavu Bhagavati gopuram, Kozhikode District.

Color Plate 8—Śrī Subrahmaṇya image inside Pernuayil temple, Kottayam District.

PLATE 1—The shore at Kovalam Bay, Trivandrum.

PLATE 2—Mountains at the southern extremity of the Ghāts near Padmanābhapuram.

PLATE 3—Bhagavatī image, ca. 15th century A.D.
(Calicut University Department of History)

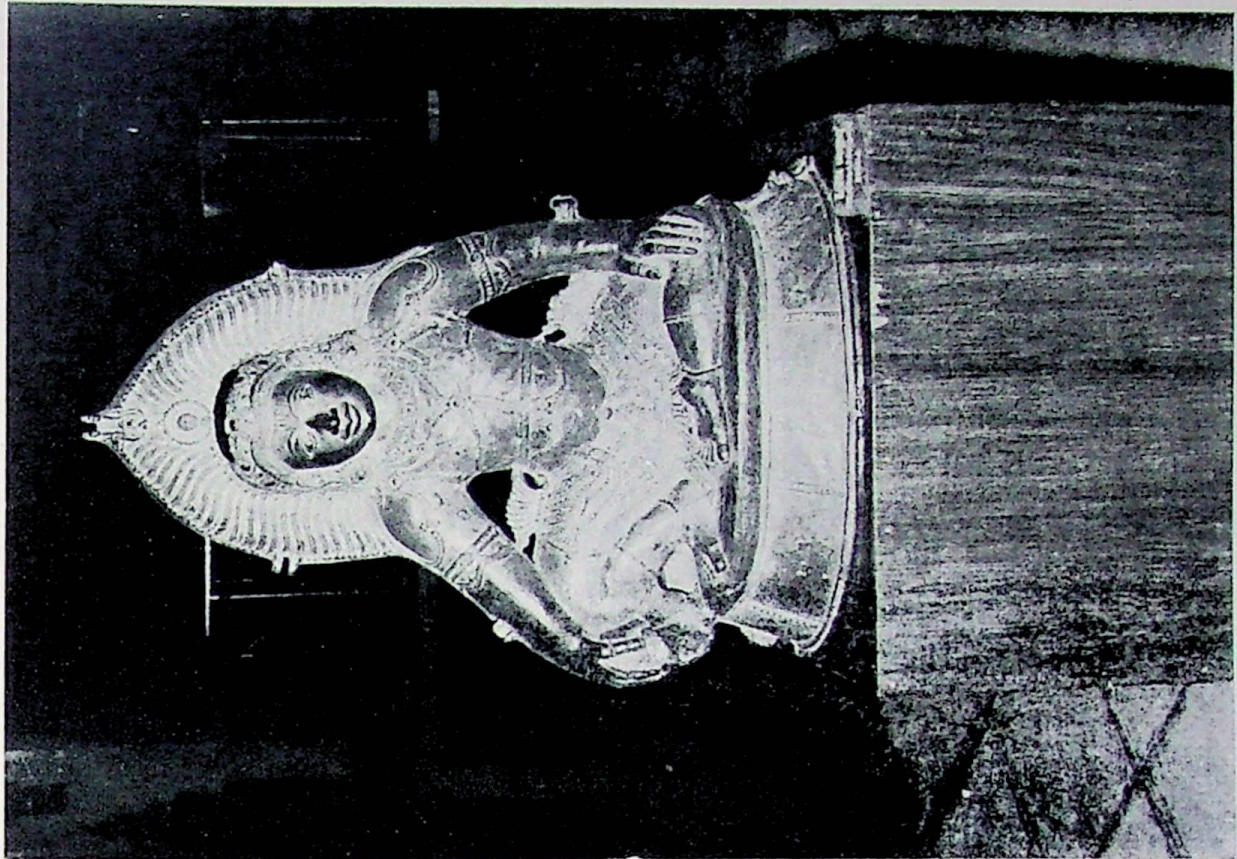



PLATE 4—Bronze image of Śāstā, 17th century A.D.
(Trivandrum Museum Sculpture Gallery)

PLATE 5—Jaina bas-relief at the Bhagavatī temple in Kallil, Ernakulam District.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

PLATE 6—Mithqal Palli, Calicut.

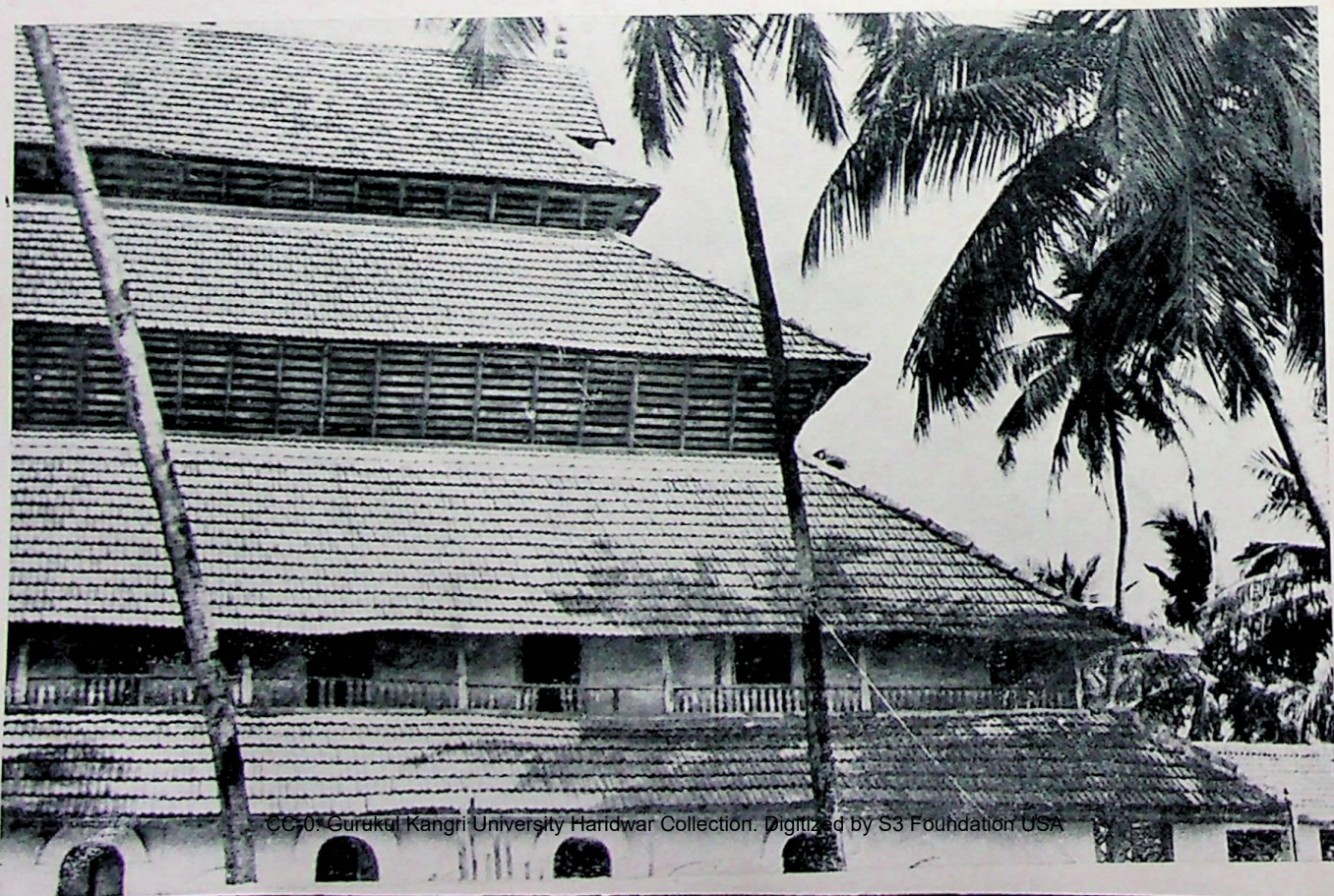
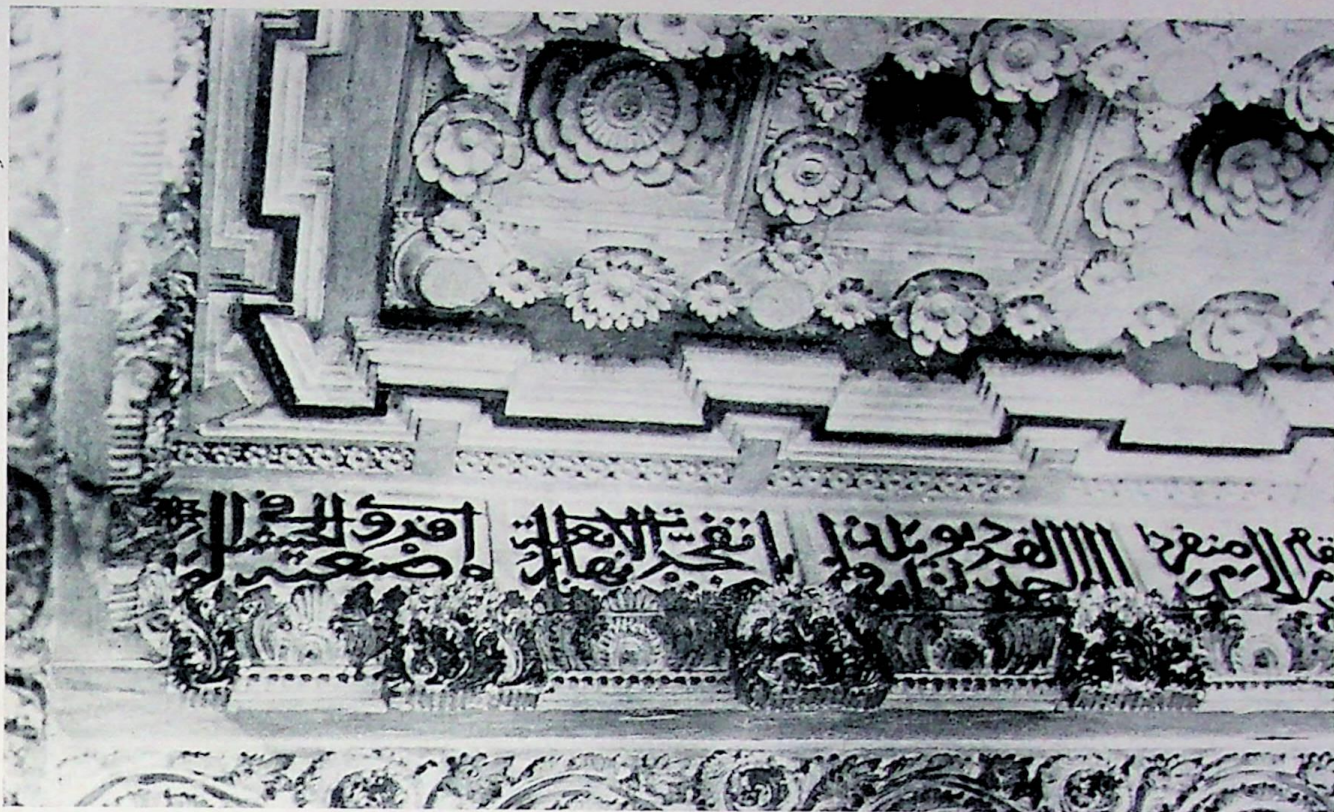



PLATE 7—Ceiling detail, Muccunti Palli, Calicut.

PLATE 8—Collapsing house near Vilinjam.

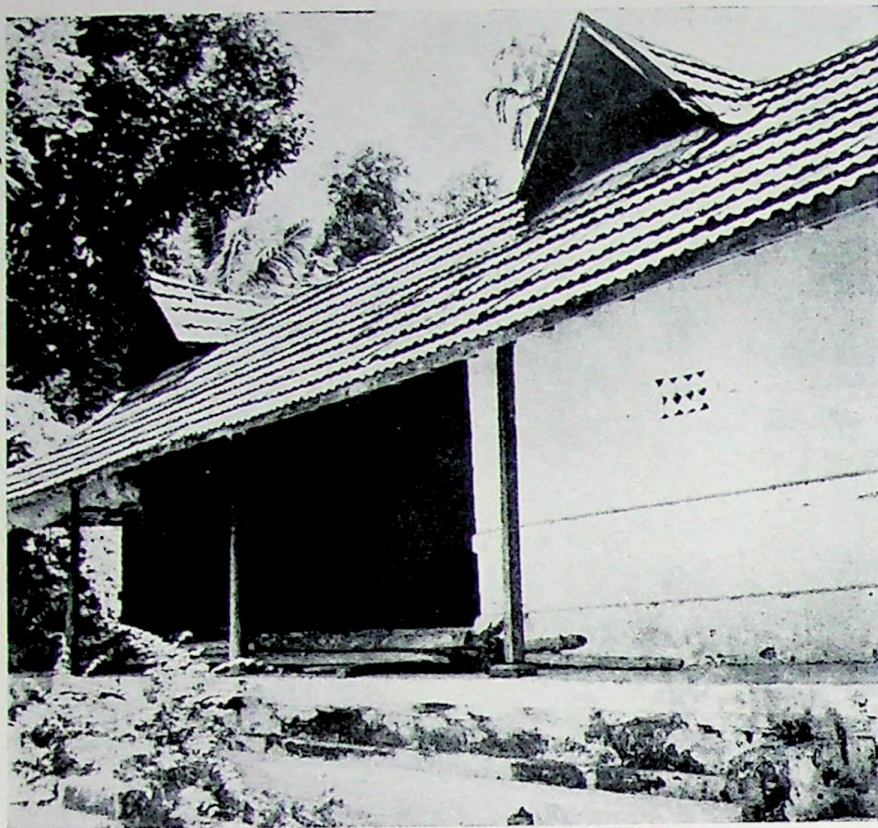



PLATE 9—Traditional house of Shivasankaran Nair, Kottayam.

PLATE 10—House and garden, Palghat District.

PLATE 11—Snakestones at the temple of Śiva, Kaviyur.

PLATE 12—Courtyard within house of Shivasankaran Nair, Kottayam.

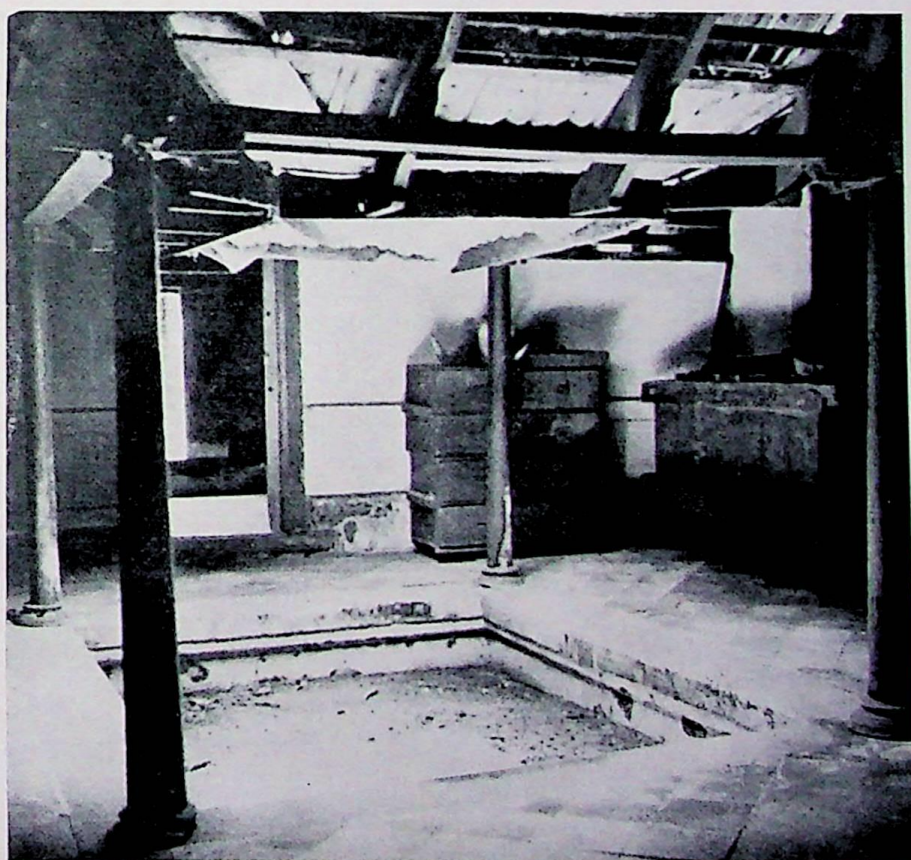
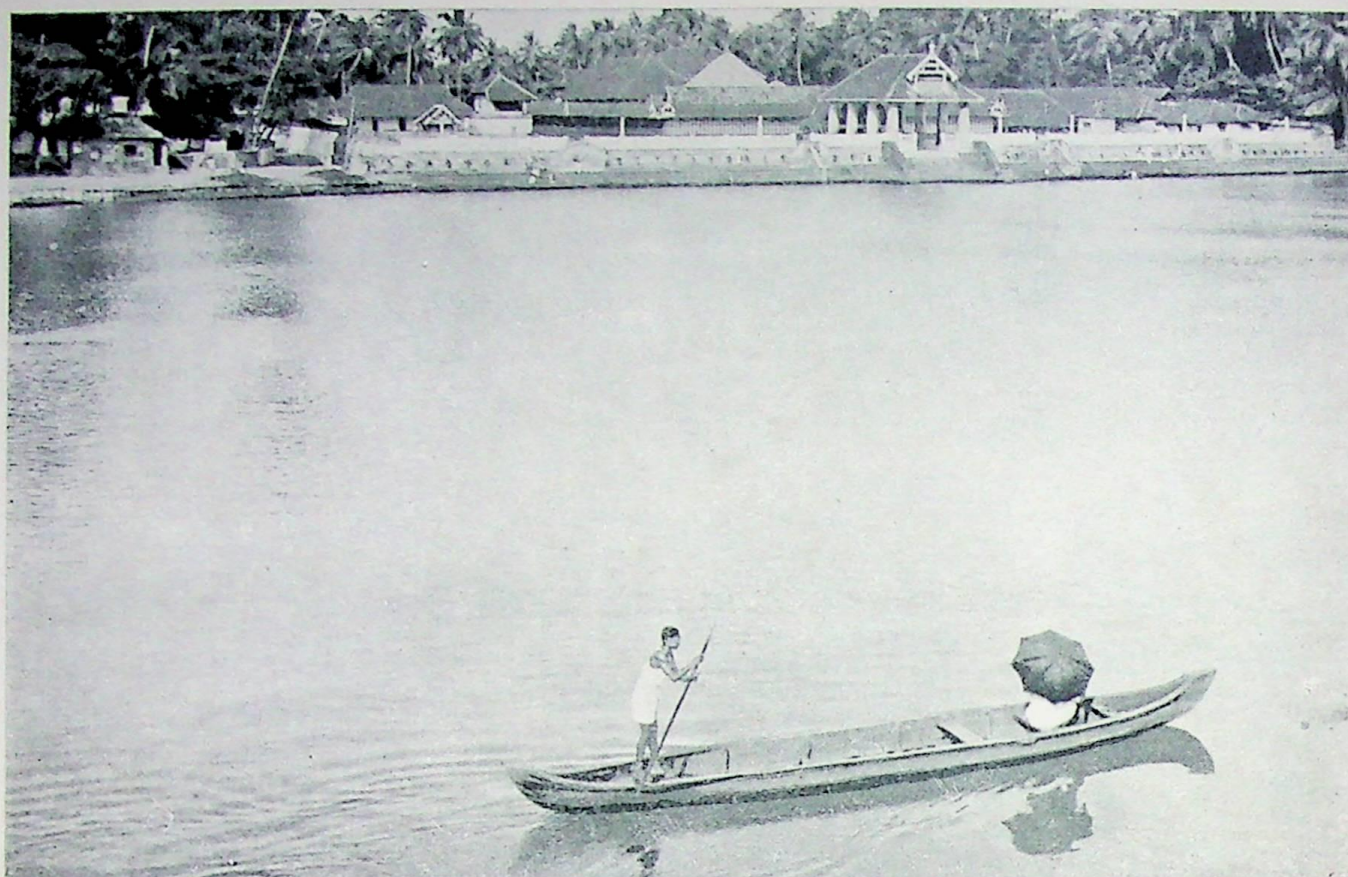



PLATE 13—Temple and river in Kerala.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

PLATE 14—Detail of laterite building blocks.

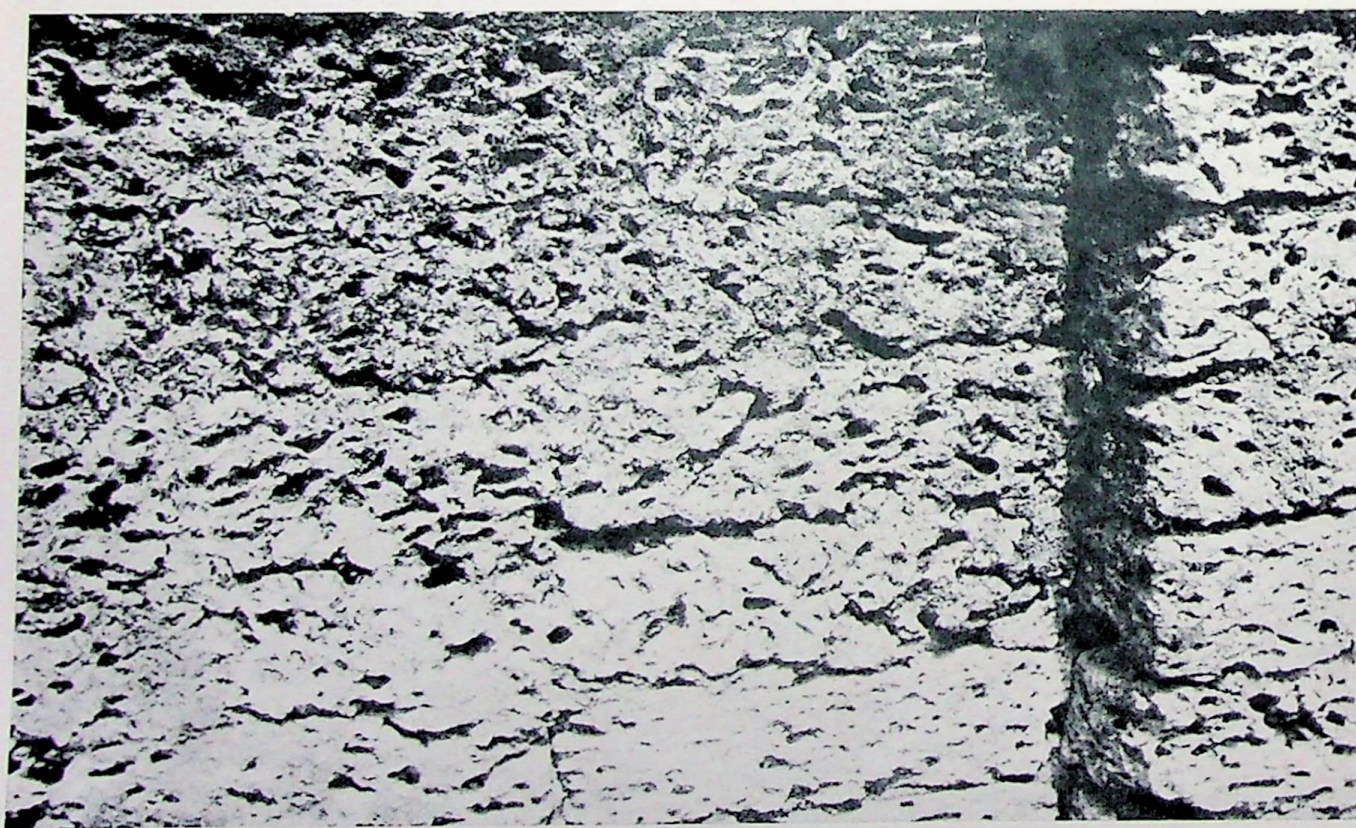



PLATE 15—Dolmen near Trichur.
(Copyright Kerala State Department of Archaeology)

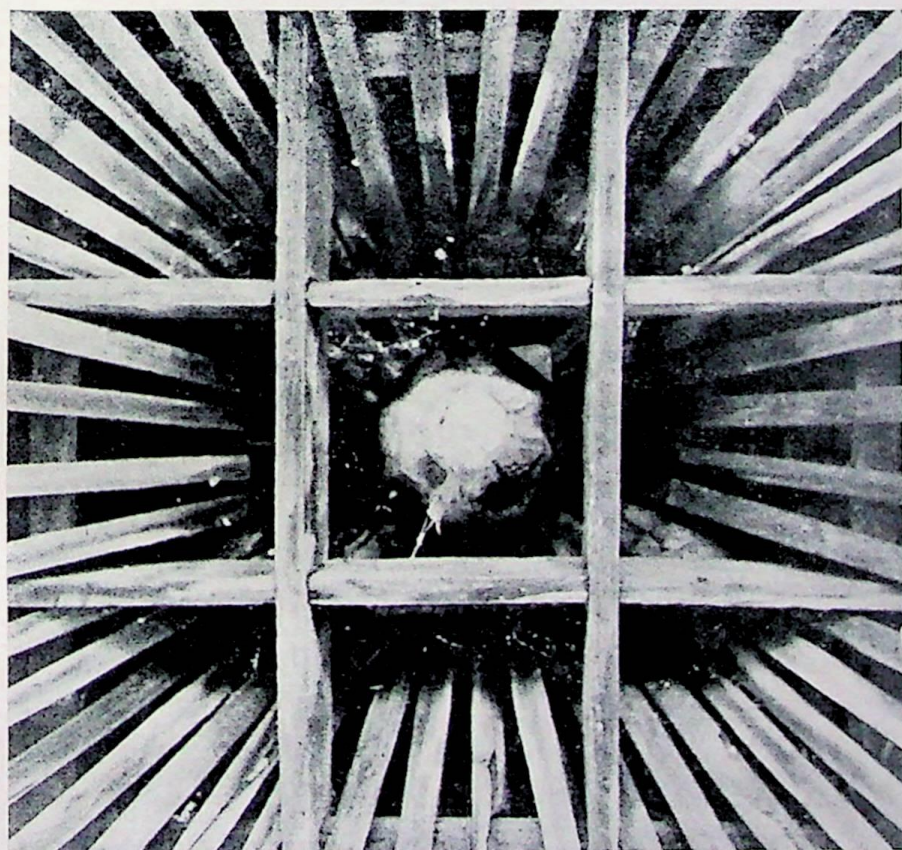



PLATE 16—Wooden ceiling of a *mandapa* at Rameśvara temple, Quilon District.

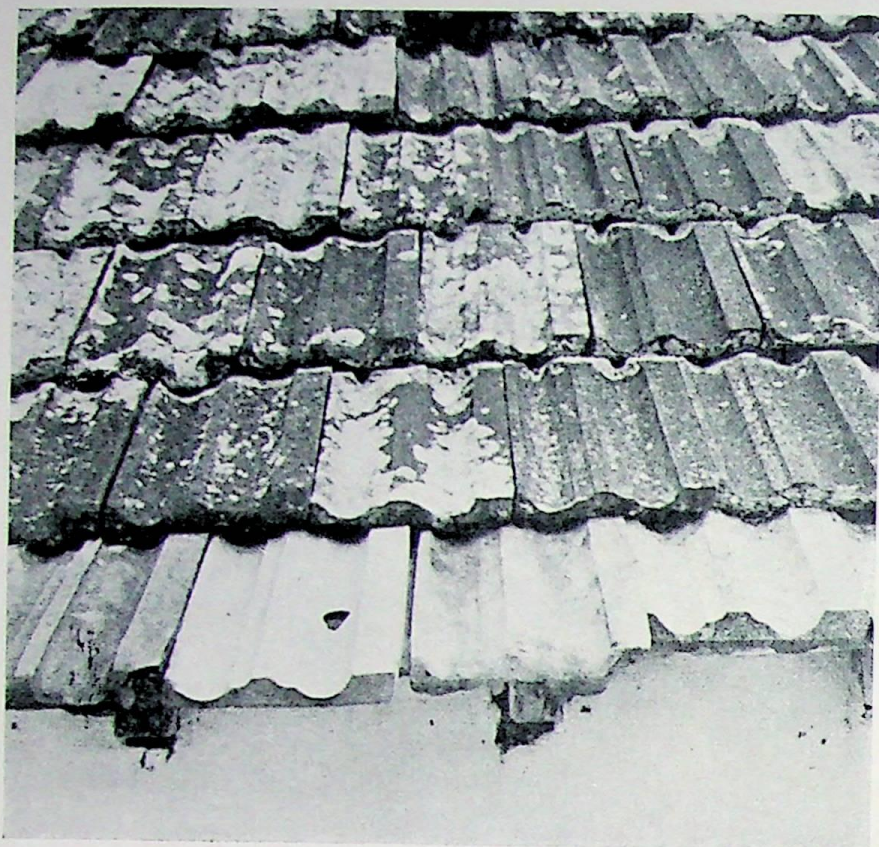



PLATE 17—Detail of tile roof at Mitramandapuram temple, Trivandrum District.

PLATE 18—"Dutch tile" roofing at the Mahādeva temple of Chattanoor, Quilon District.

PLATE 19—Copper-covered *srikovil* of Śiva at Pallavur, Palghat District.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

PLATE 20—Rock-cut Śiva shrine at Vilinjam, Trivandrum District.

Plate 21—Tirunandikara Temple, Trivandrum District.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

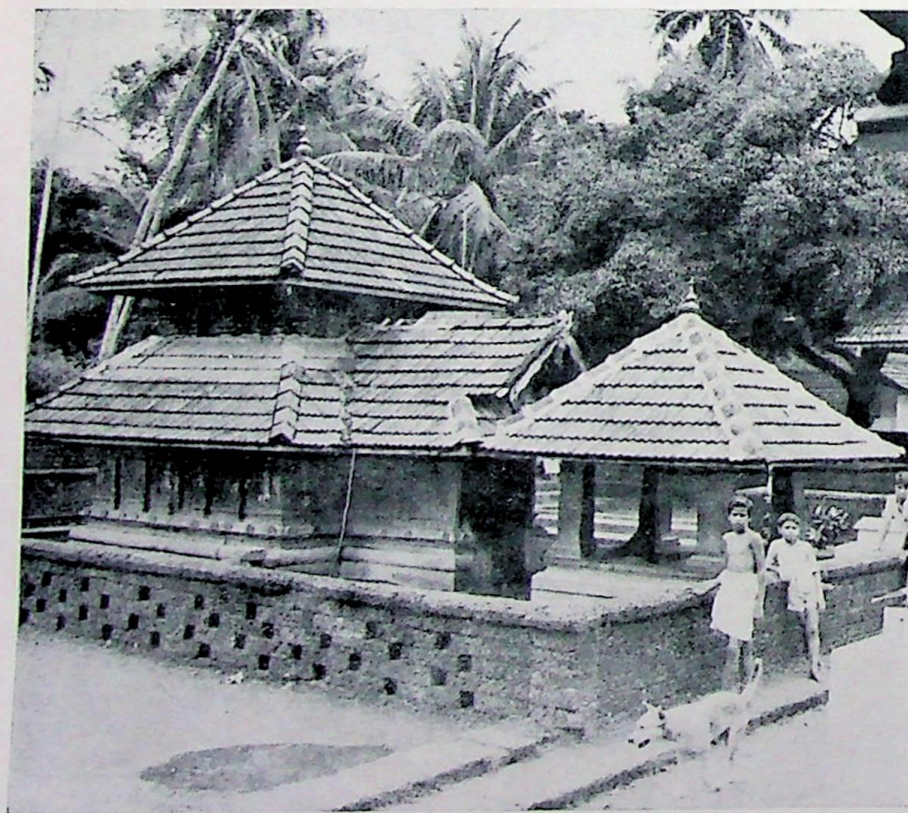



Plate 22—Subsidiary temple of Durgā at Trichambaram temple, Cannanore District.

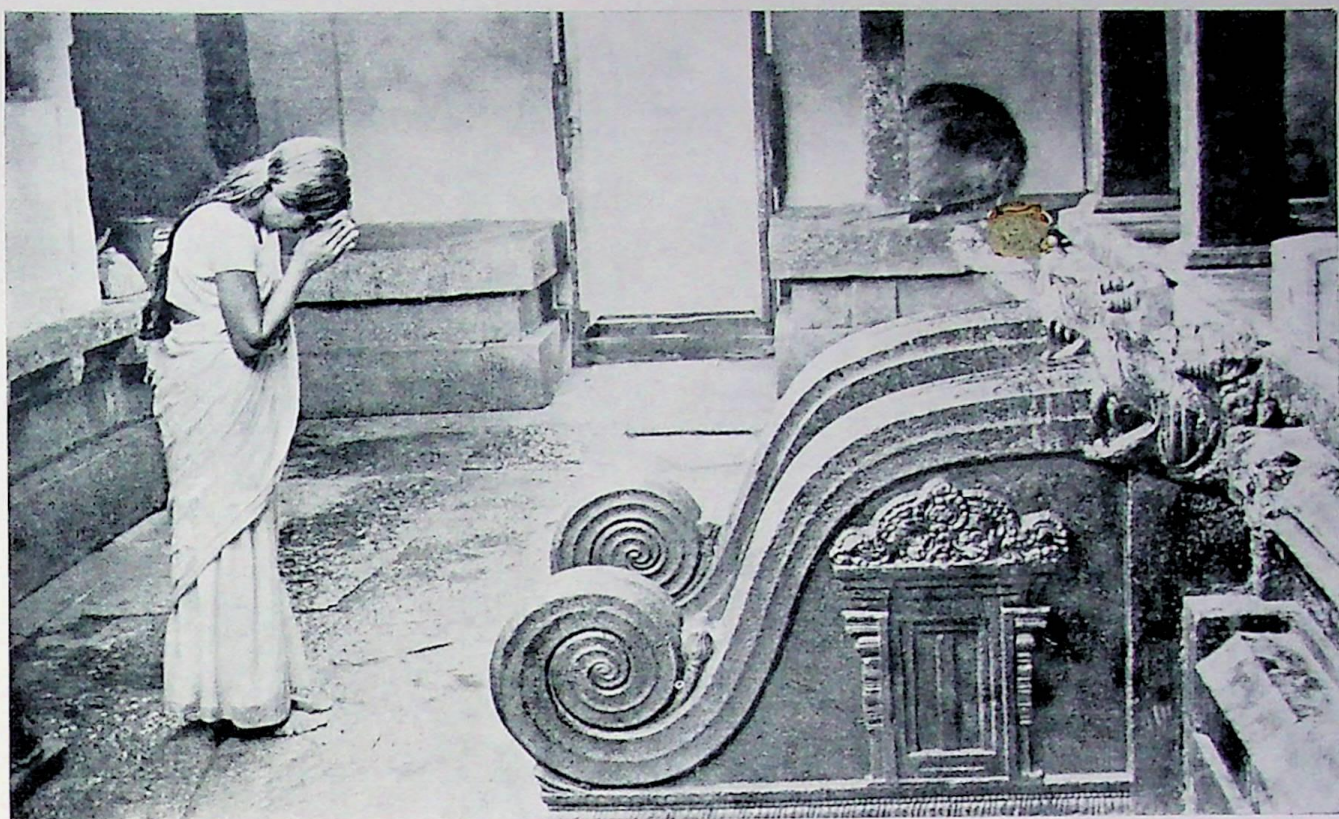



PLATE 23—Prayer before the temple of Kazhakuttam.

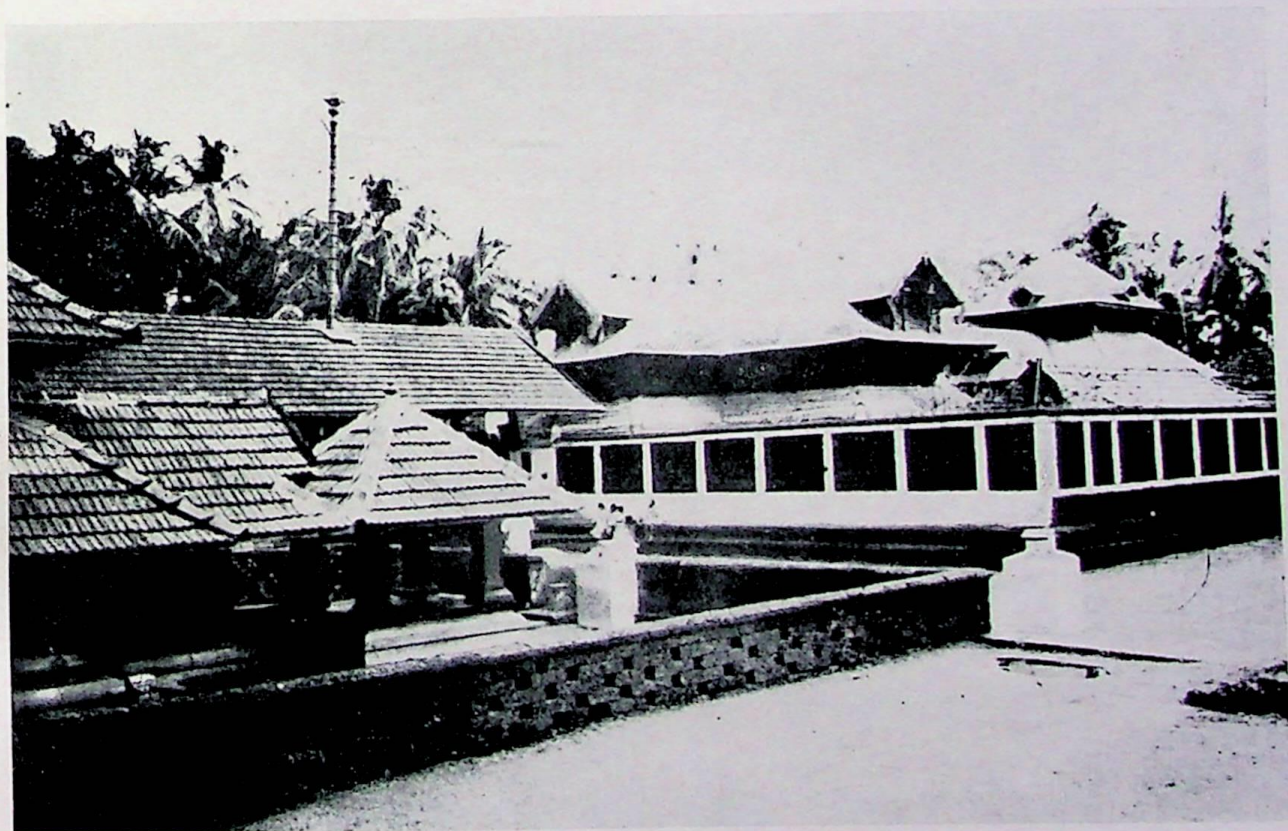



PLATE 24—Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple, Cannanore District.

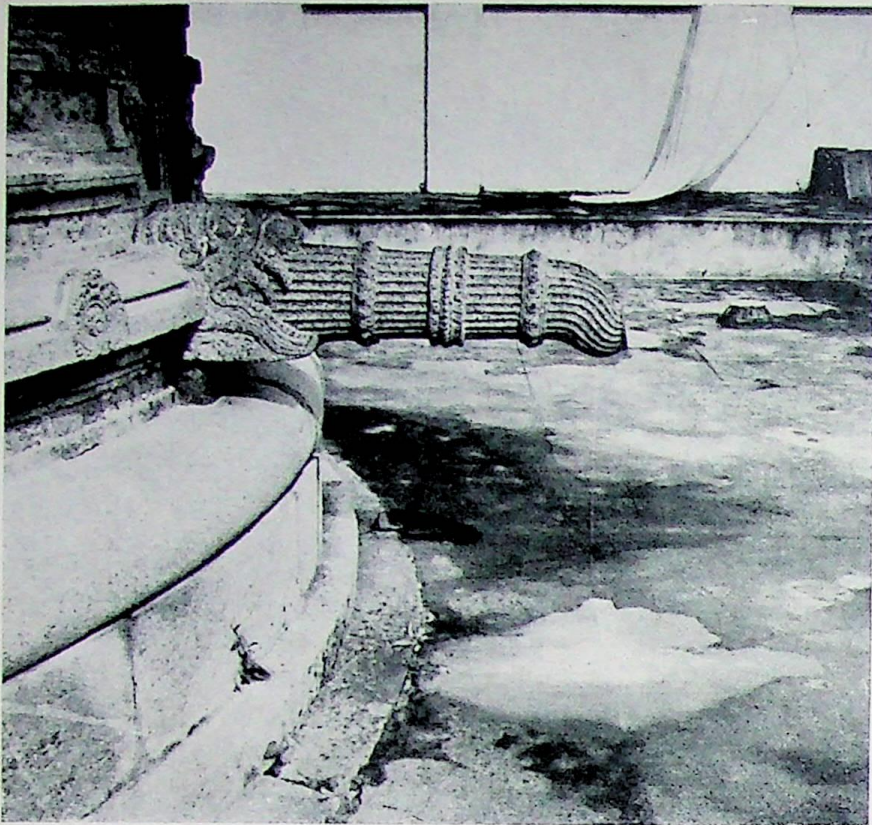



PLATE 25—*Pranāla* with dripping offerings at Chennamattu Mahādeva temple, Quilon District.

PLATE 26—Kṛṣṇa lifts Mt. Govardhana and conquers the evil serpent Kāliya in the bracket carvings of the Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple, Cannanore District.

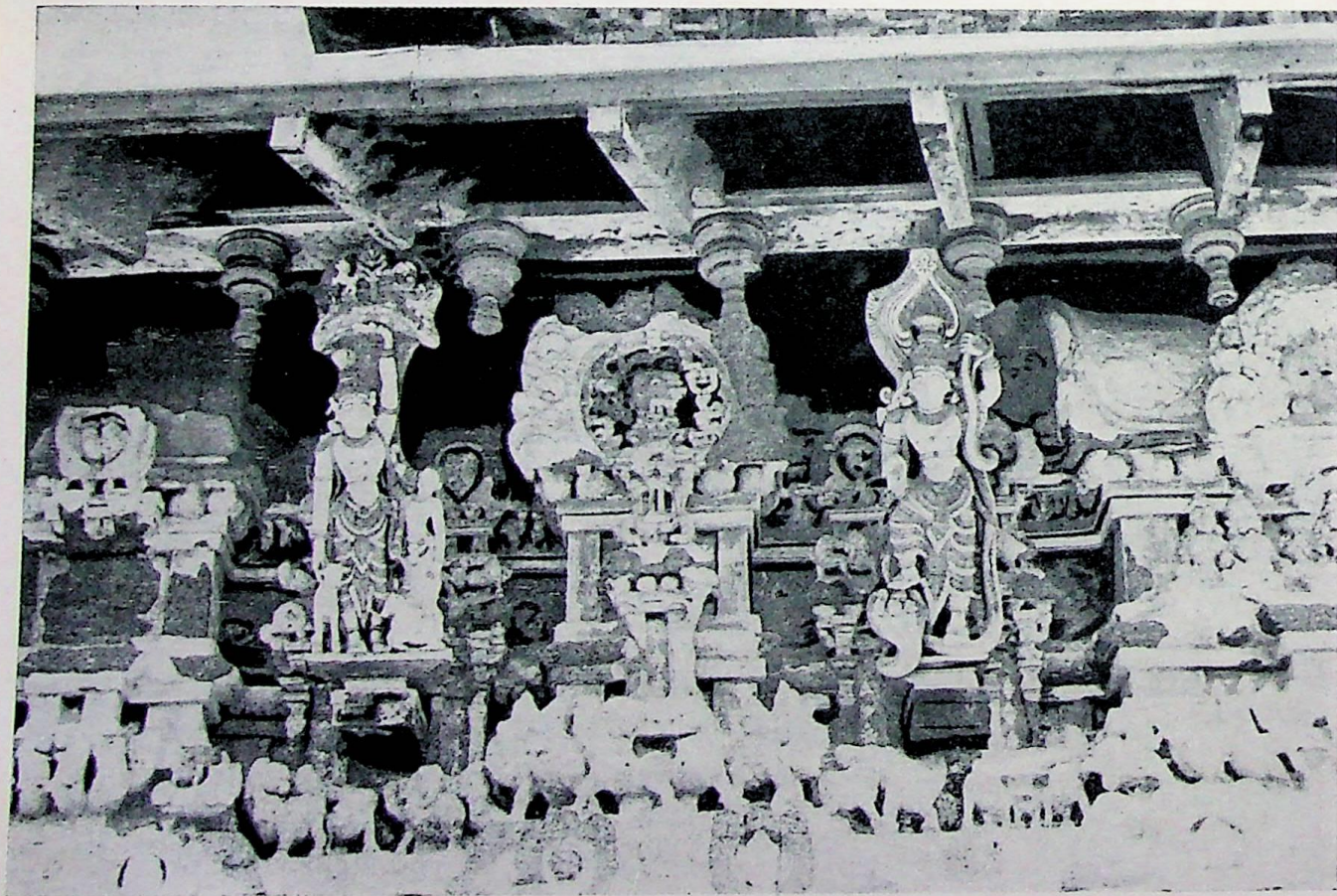
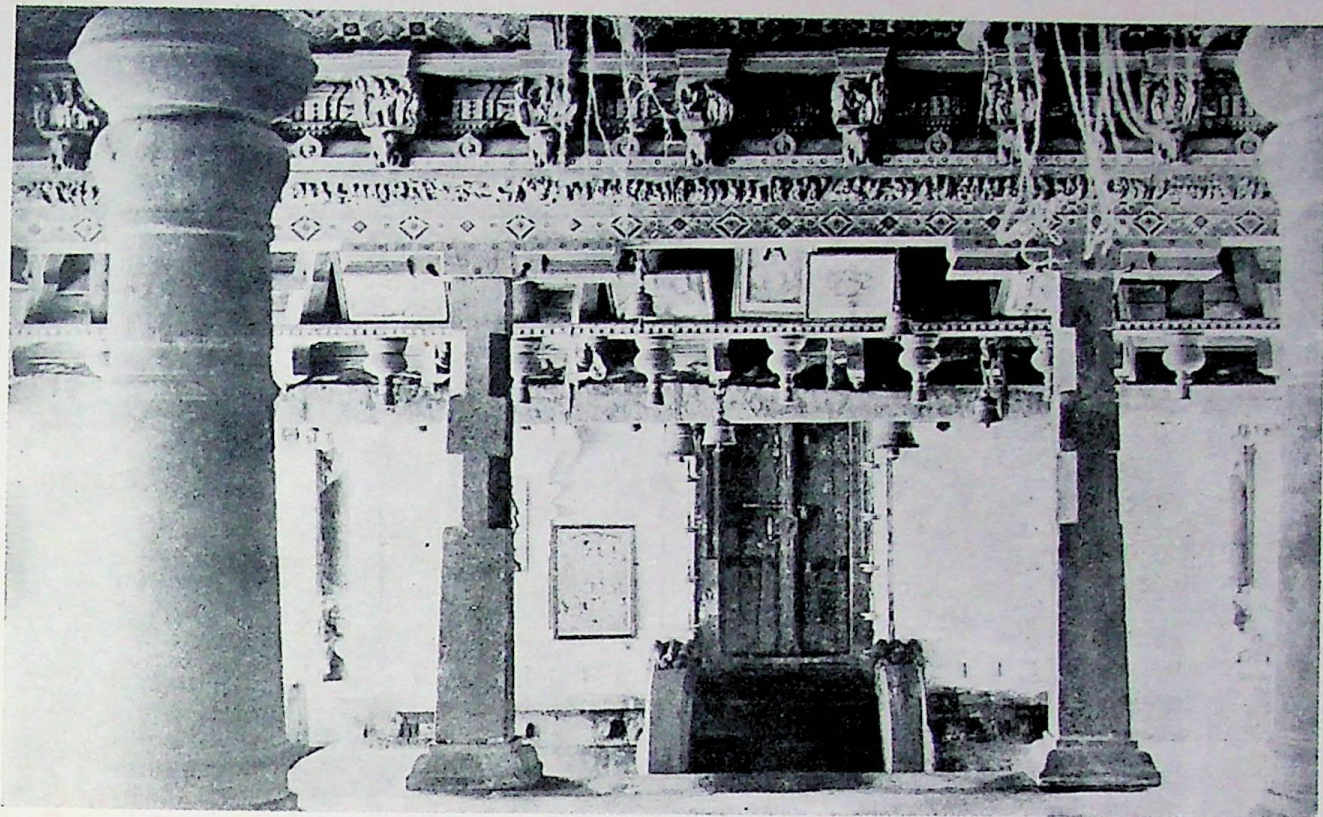



PLATE 27—View through the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* toward the *srikovil* of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa.

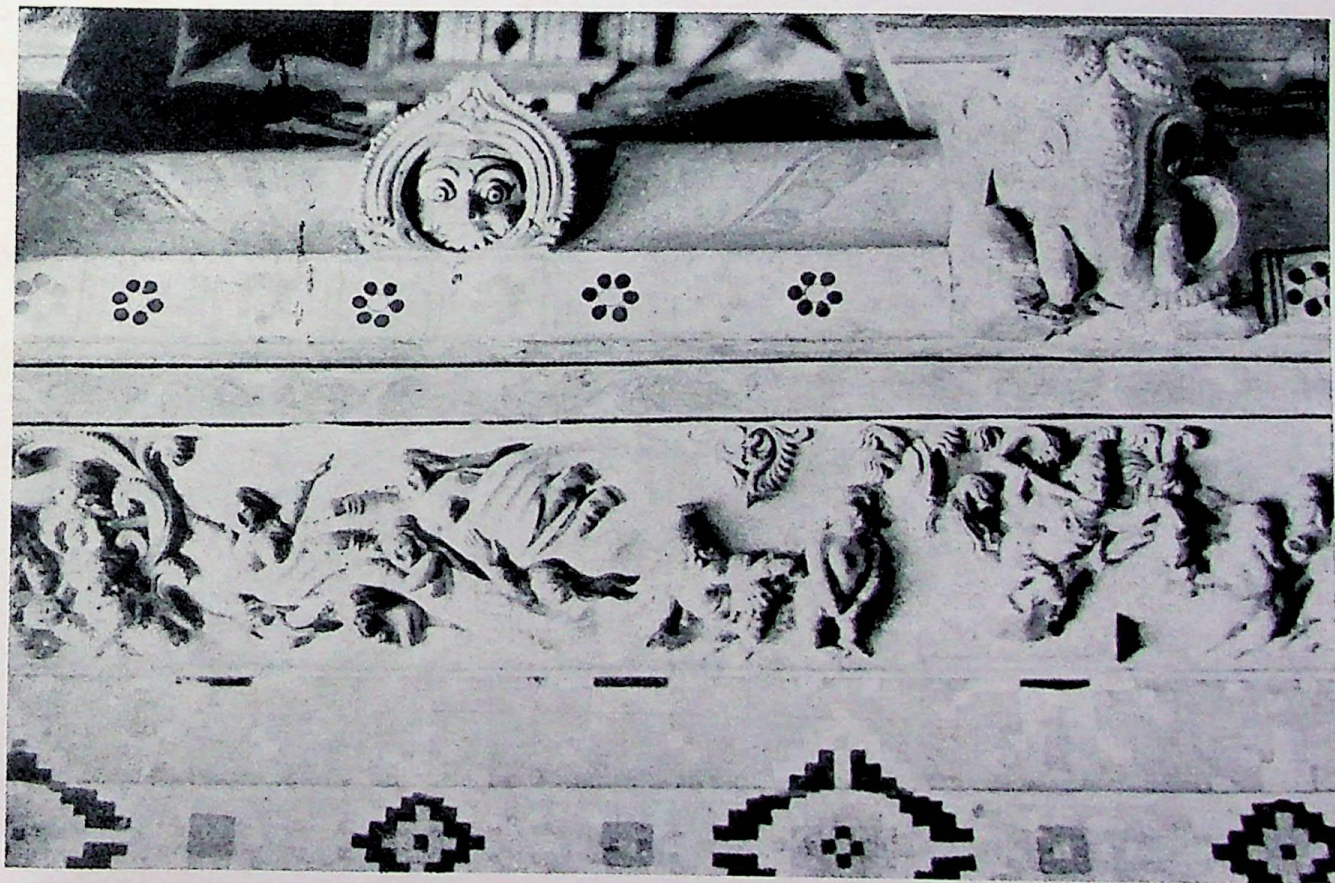



PLATE 28—Detail of a cornice frieze at the temple of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa.

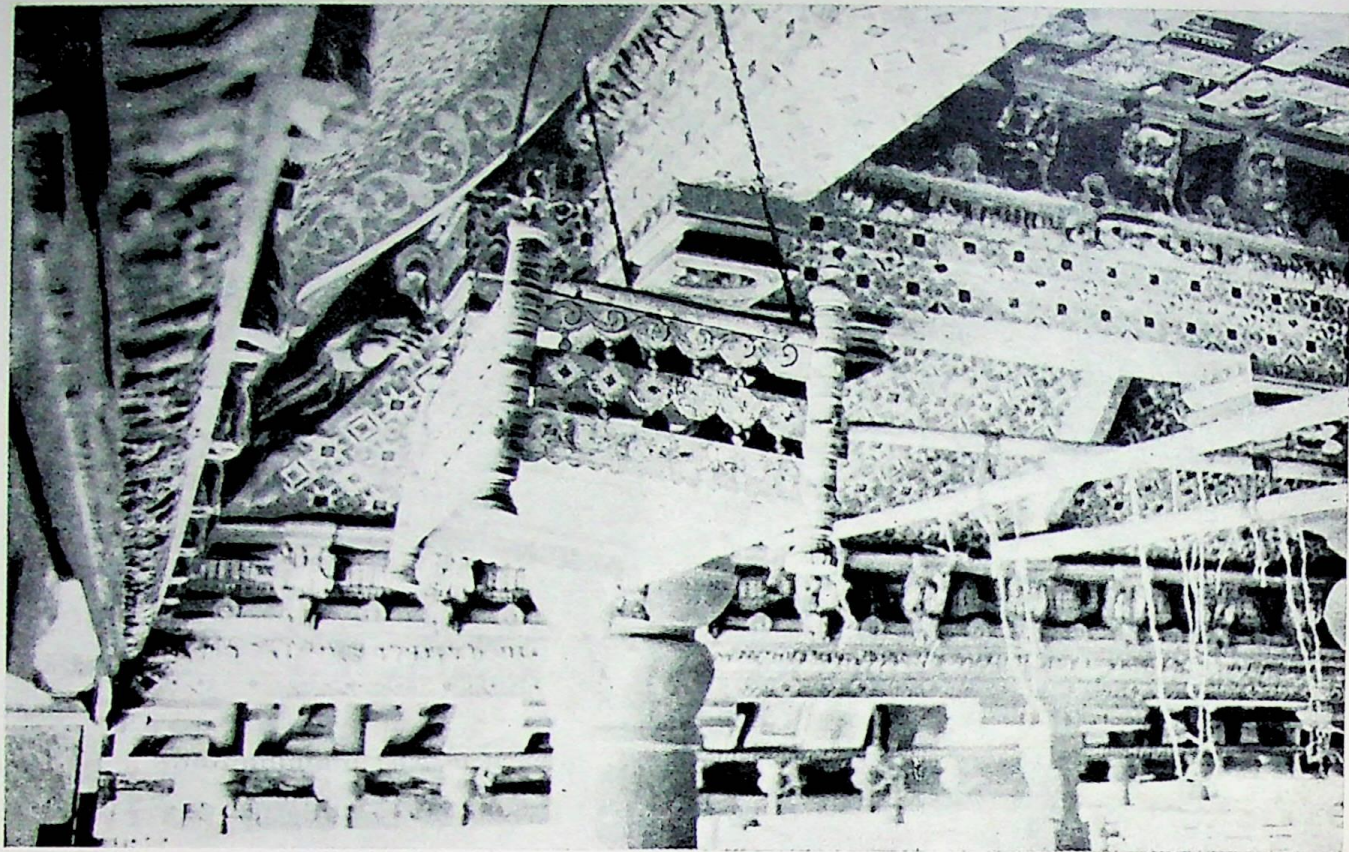



PLATE 29—The cradle of Kṛṣṇa in the *namaskāra maṇḍapa* of his temple of Trichambaram.

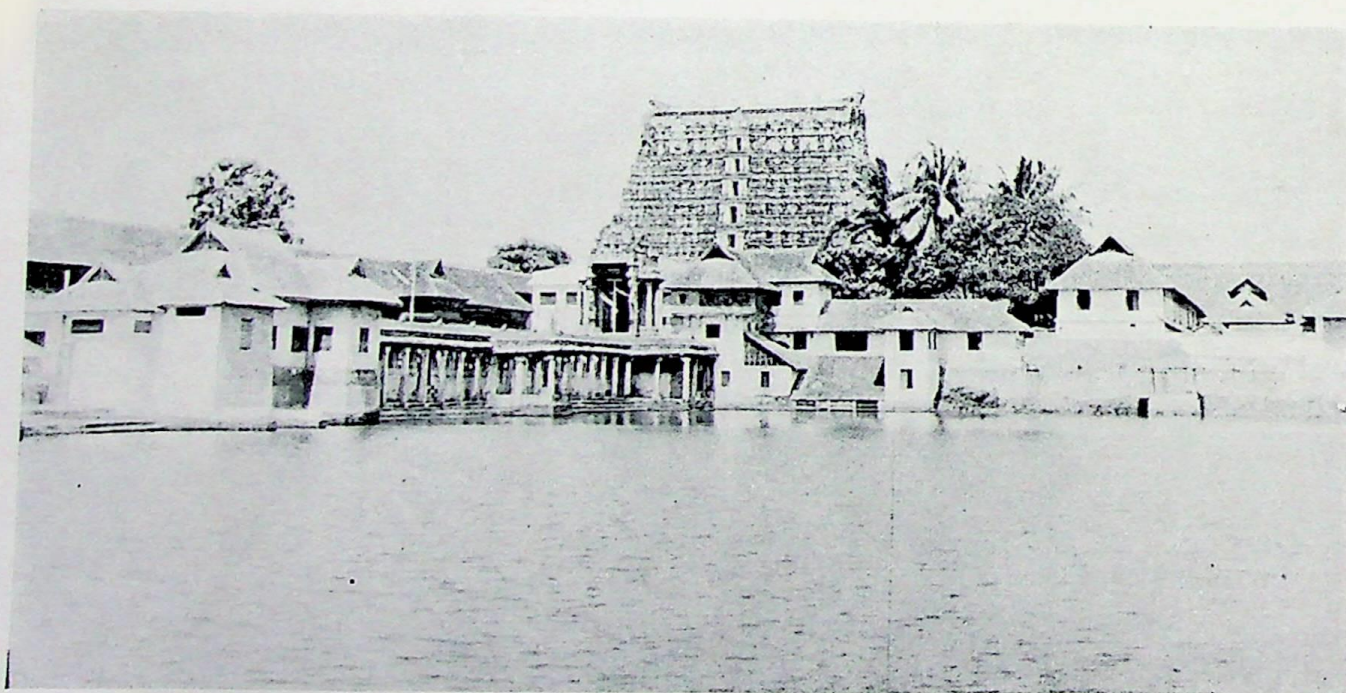



PLATE 30—Distant view of Padmanābhasvāmi temple, Trivandrum.

(*Copyright Kerala State Department of Archaeology*)

PLATE 31—Bracket figure at Thiruvanchikulam temple with "Hoysala" elements, Trichur District.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

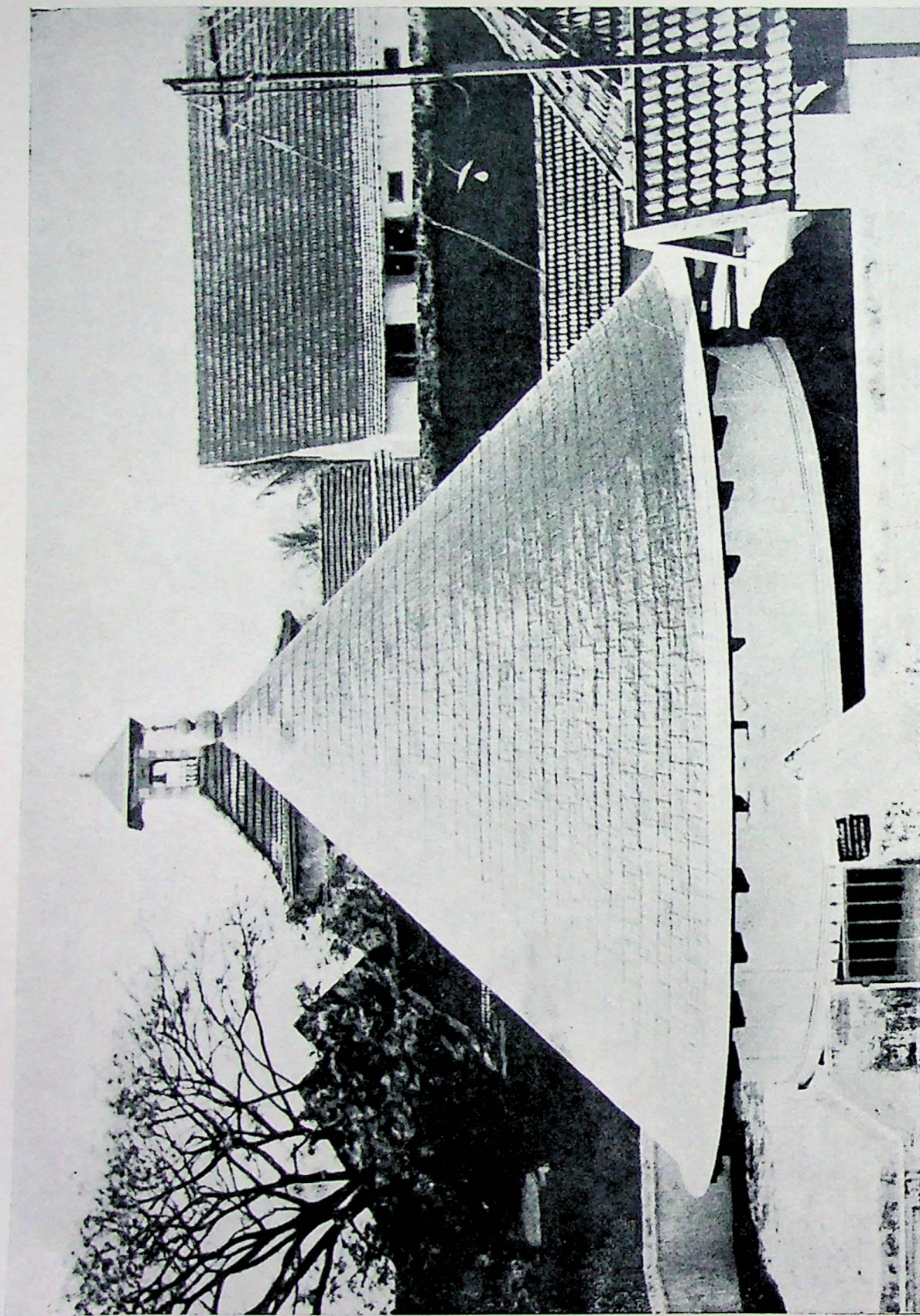



PLATE 32—View from Mattancheri Palace, Cochin, toward temple and synagogue.

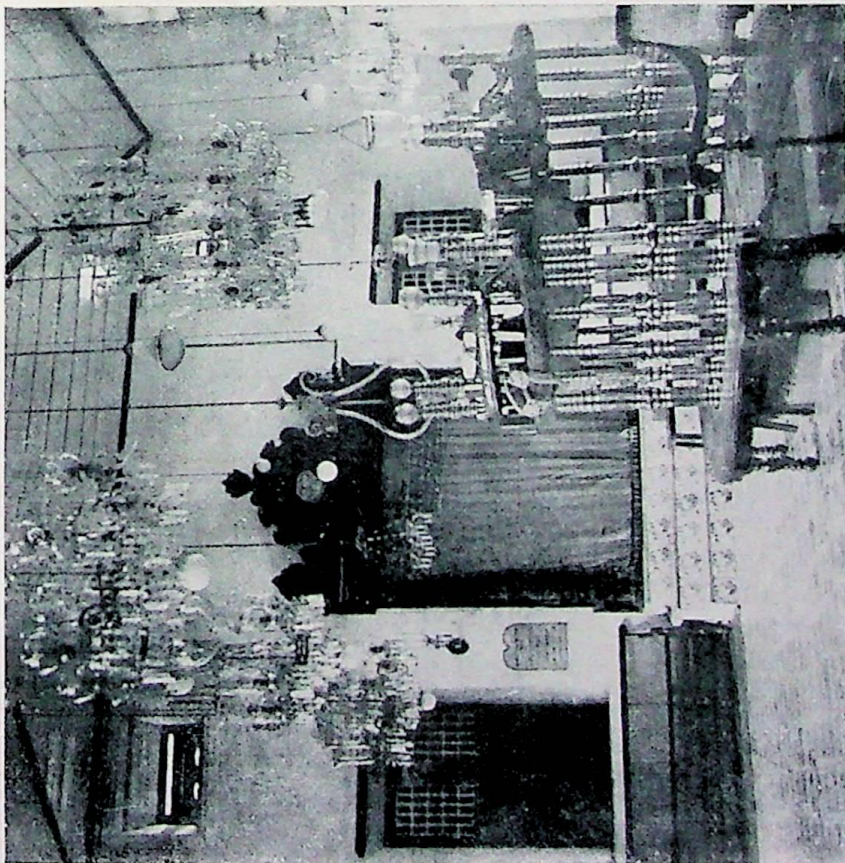



PLATE 33—Interior of the Cochin Synagogue.

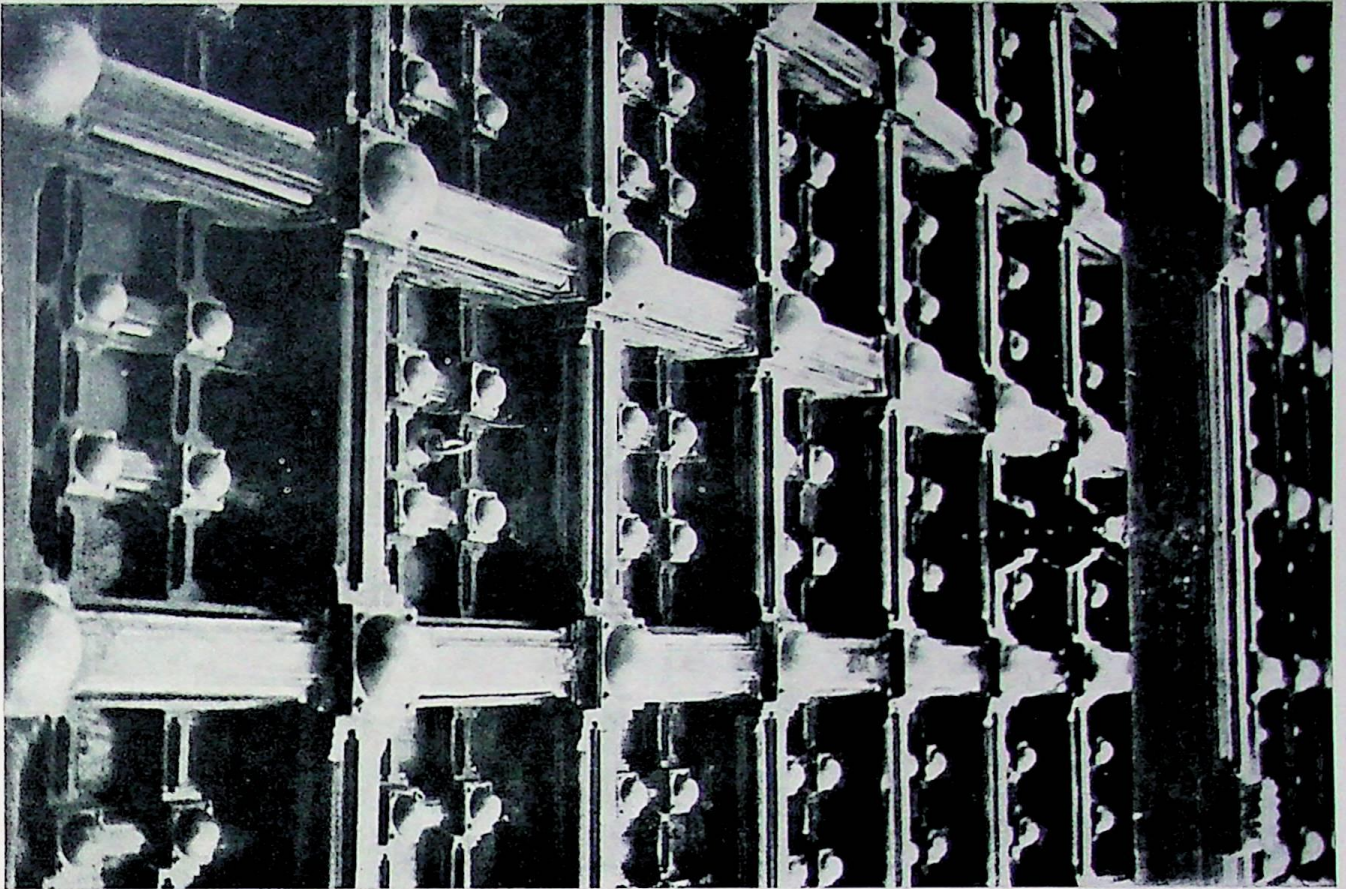



PLATE 34—Ceiling of Mattancheri Palace, Cochin.

PLATE 35—Painting in Mattancheri Palace, Cochin. Kṛṣṇa lifts Mt. Govardhana.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India).

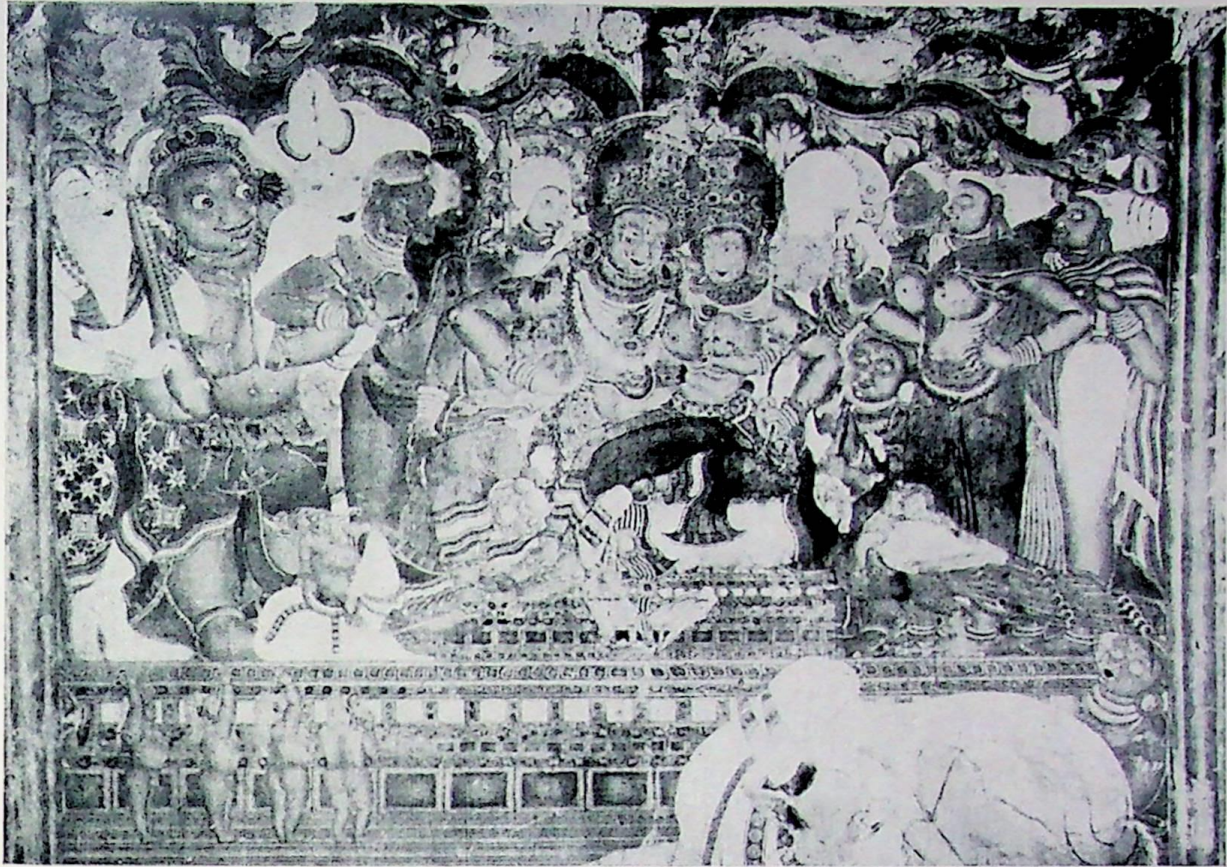



PLATE 36—Mural showing Śiva and Pārvatī at Mattancheri Palace, Cochin.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

PLATE 37—Image of Viṣṇu painted at Mattancheri Palace, Cochin.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

PLATE 38—Viṣṇu amid lotus flowers at Mattancheri Palace, Cochin.

(Copyright: Archaeological Survey of India)

PLATE 39—Unfinished Painting of Viṣṇu, Mattancheri Palace, Cochin. (*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

PLATE 40—Pārvatī and Attendants, Mattancheri Palace, Cochin. (*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

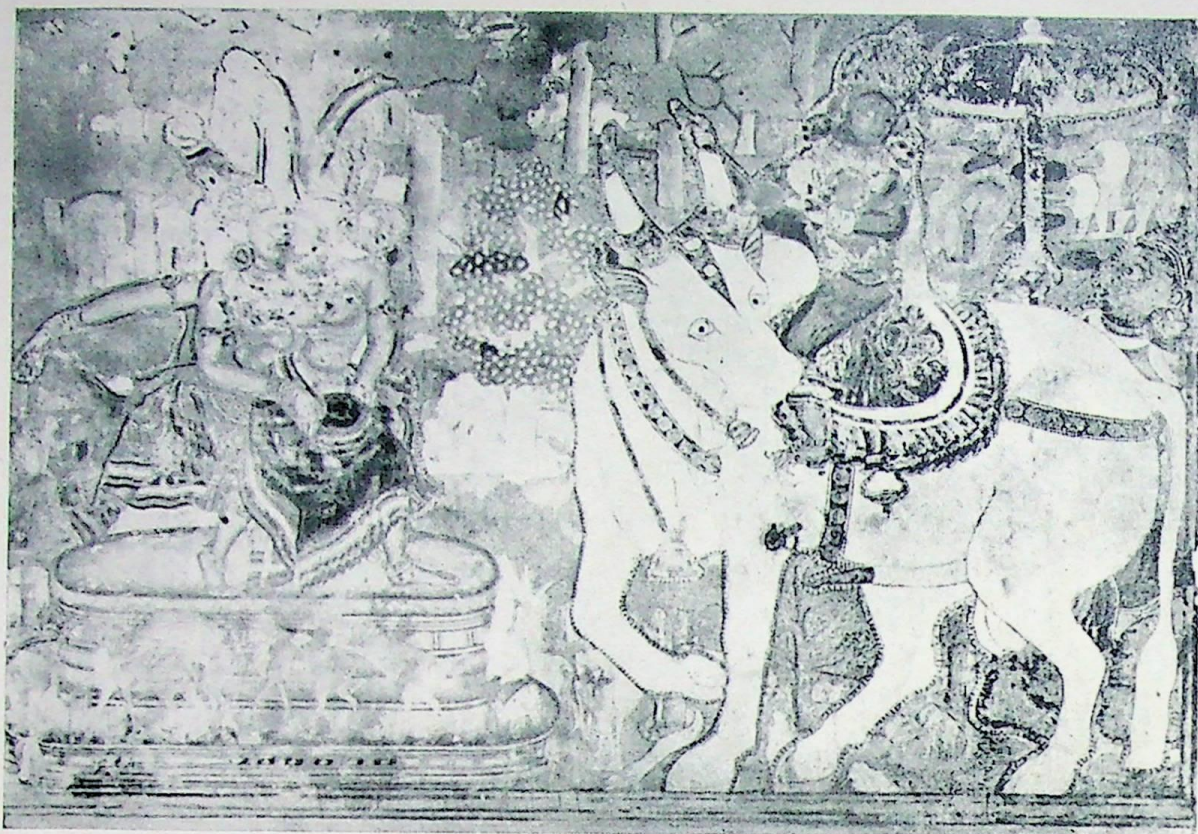



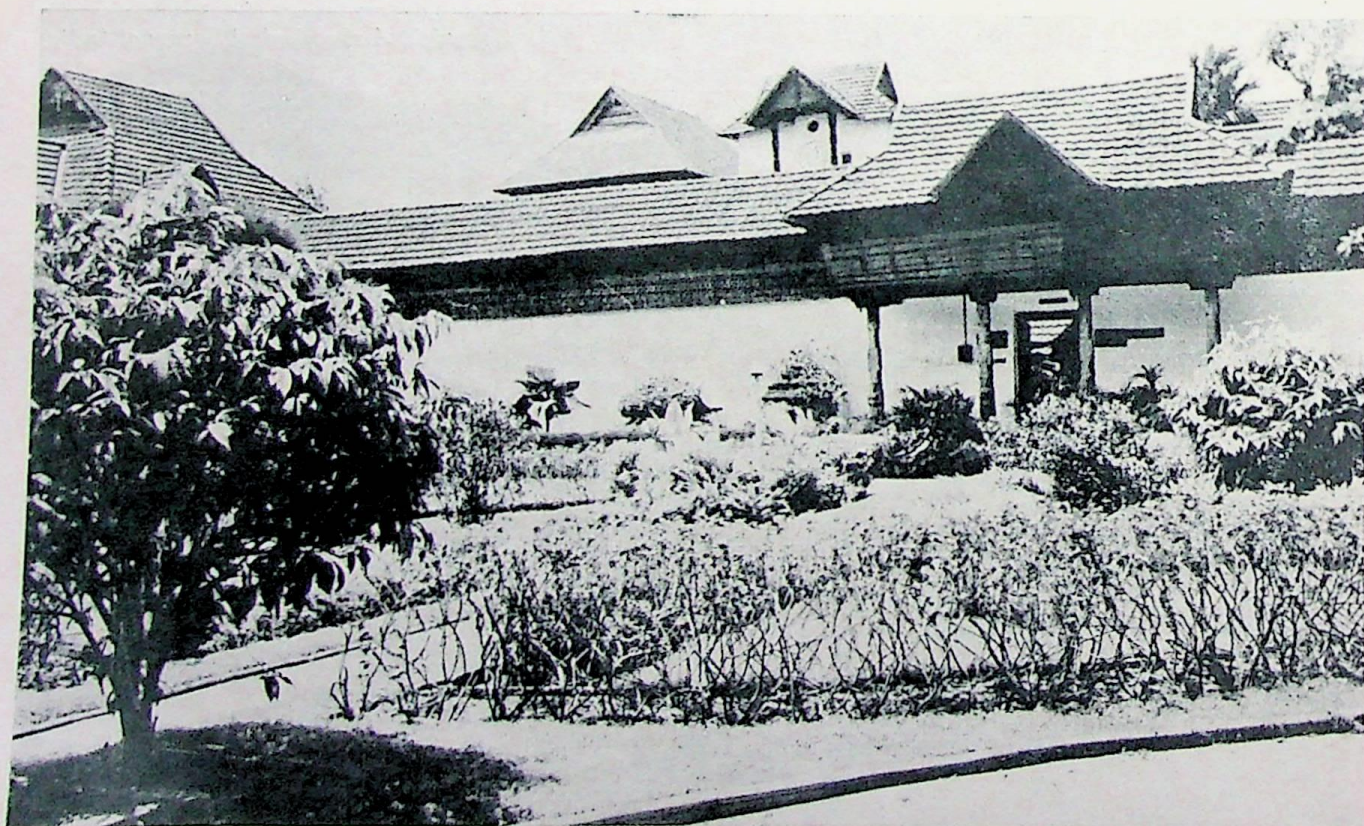
PLATE 41—Śiva, Mohini and Pārvatī in the Forest, Mattancheri Palace, Cochin.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

PLATE 42—Padmanabhapuram Palace, Kanyakumari District.

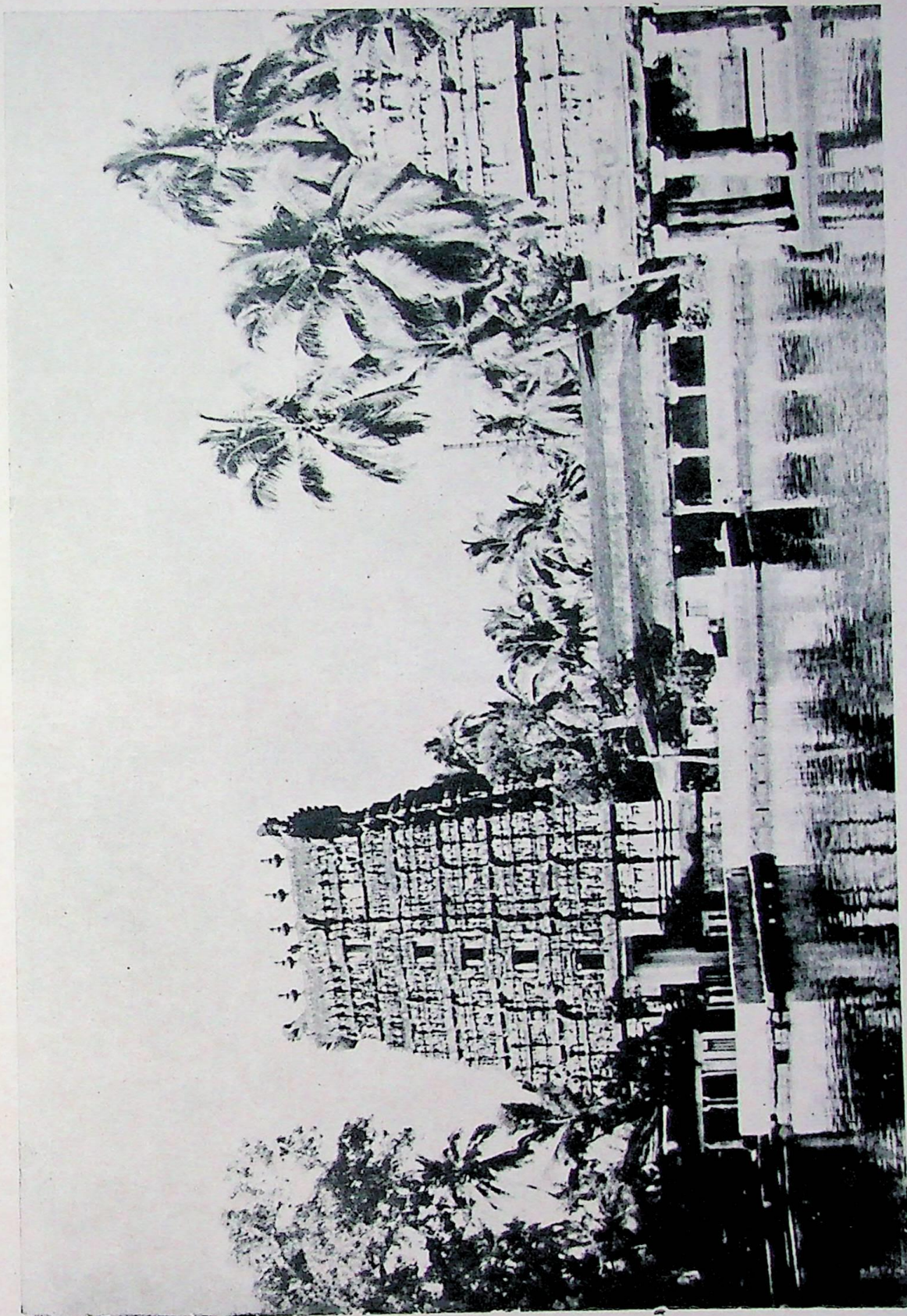



PLATE 43—Nīlakaṇṭhasvāmi temple beside Padmanābhapuram Palace.

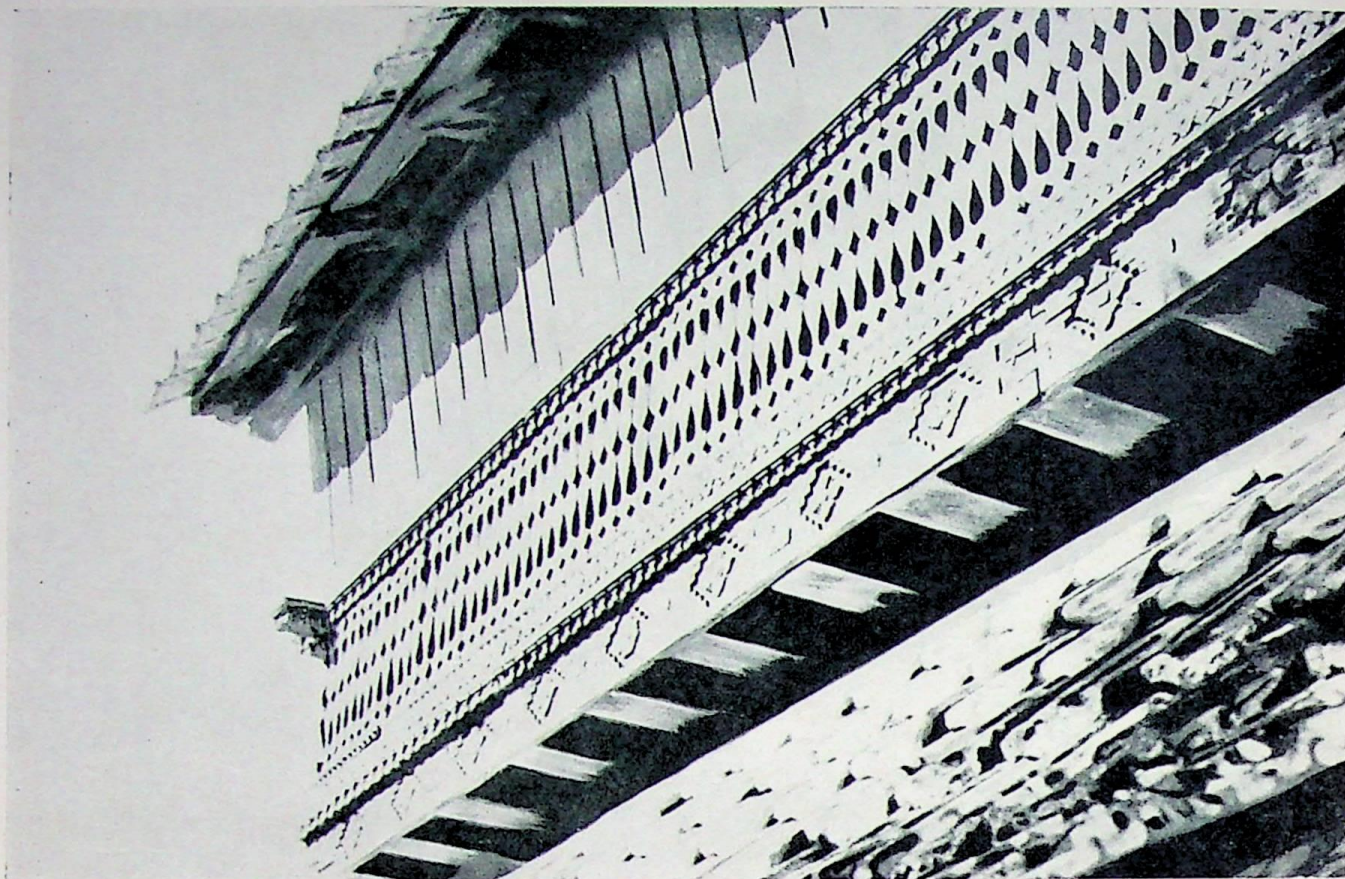



PLATE 44—Balcony of Padmanābhapuram Palace.

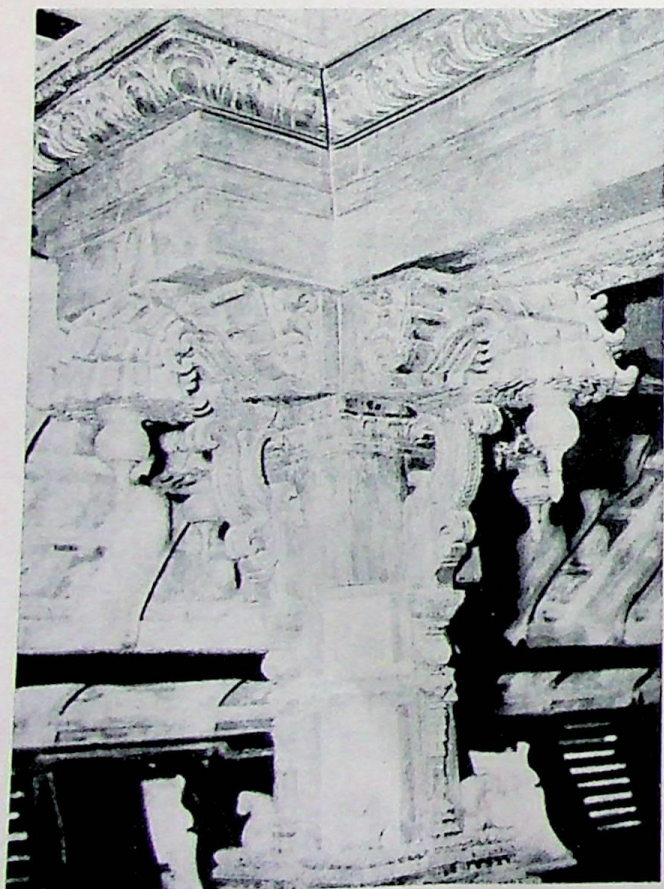



PLATE 45—Wooden Pillar at Padmanābhapuram Palace.
(Copyright Kerala State Department of Archaeology)

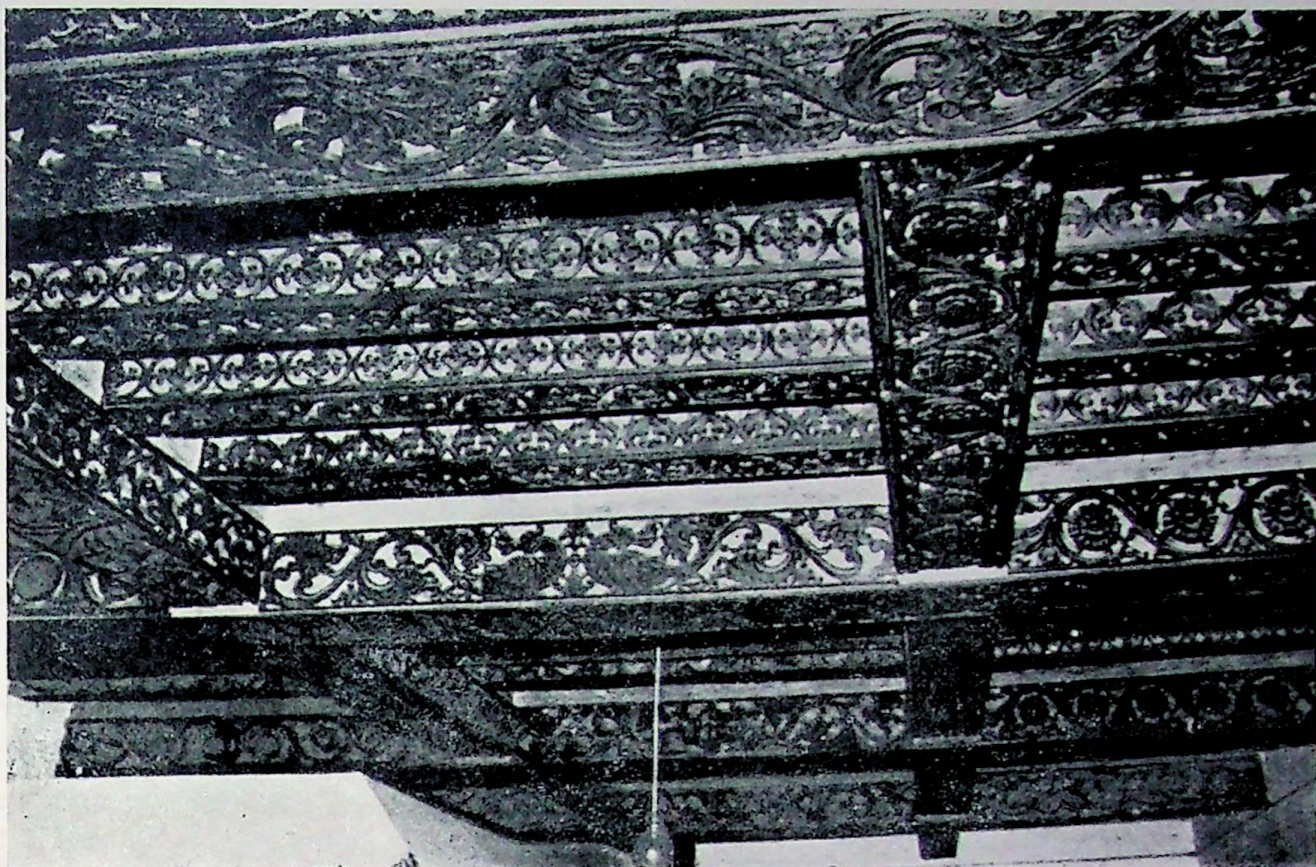



PLATE 46—Ceiling of Padmanābhapuram Palace.

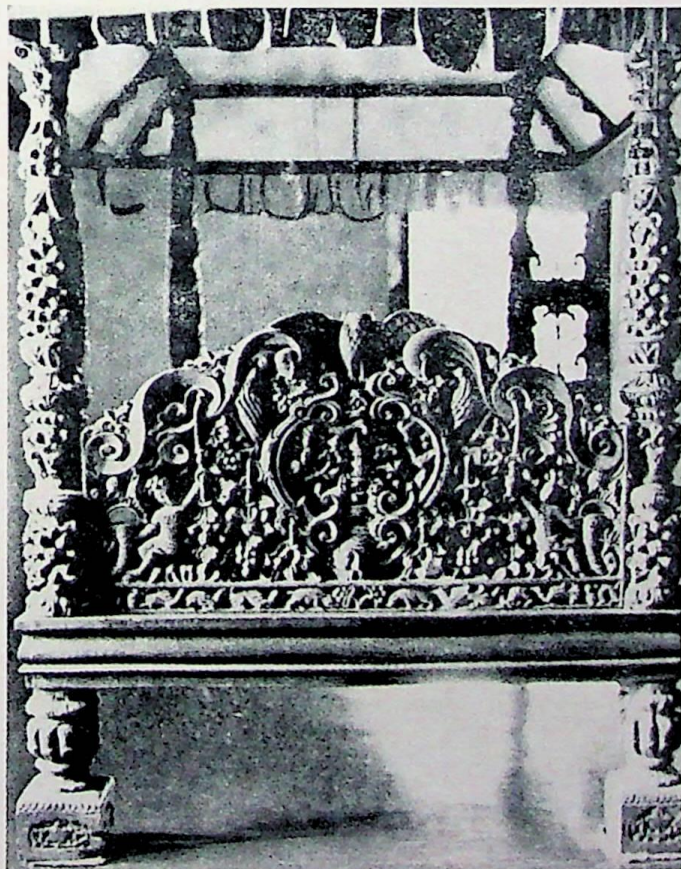



PLATE 47—Bedboard carving of Padmanābhapuram Palace.

PLATE 48—Roof Complex of Padmanābhapuram Palace.

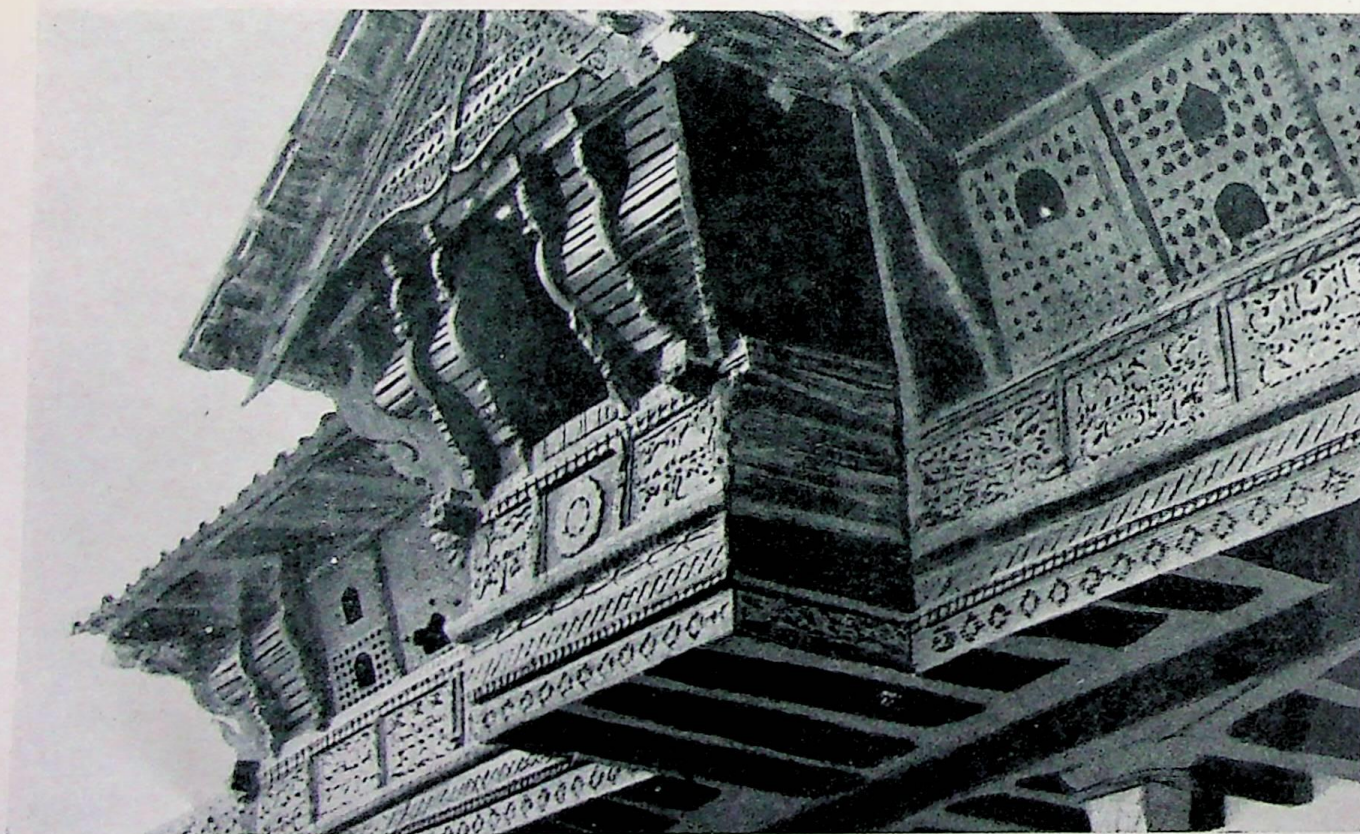



PLATE 49—Council Chamber exterior, Padmanābhapuram Palace.

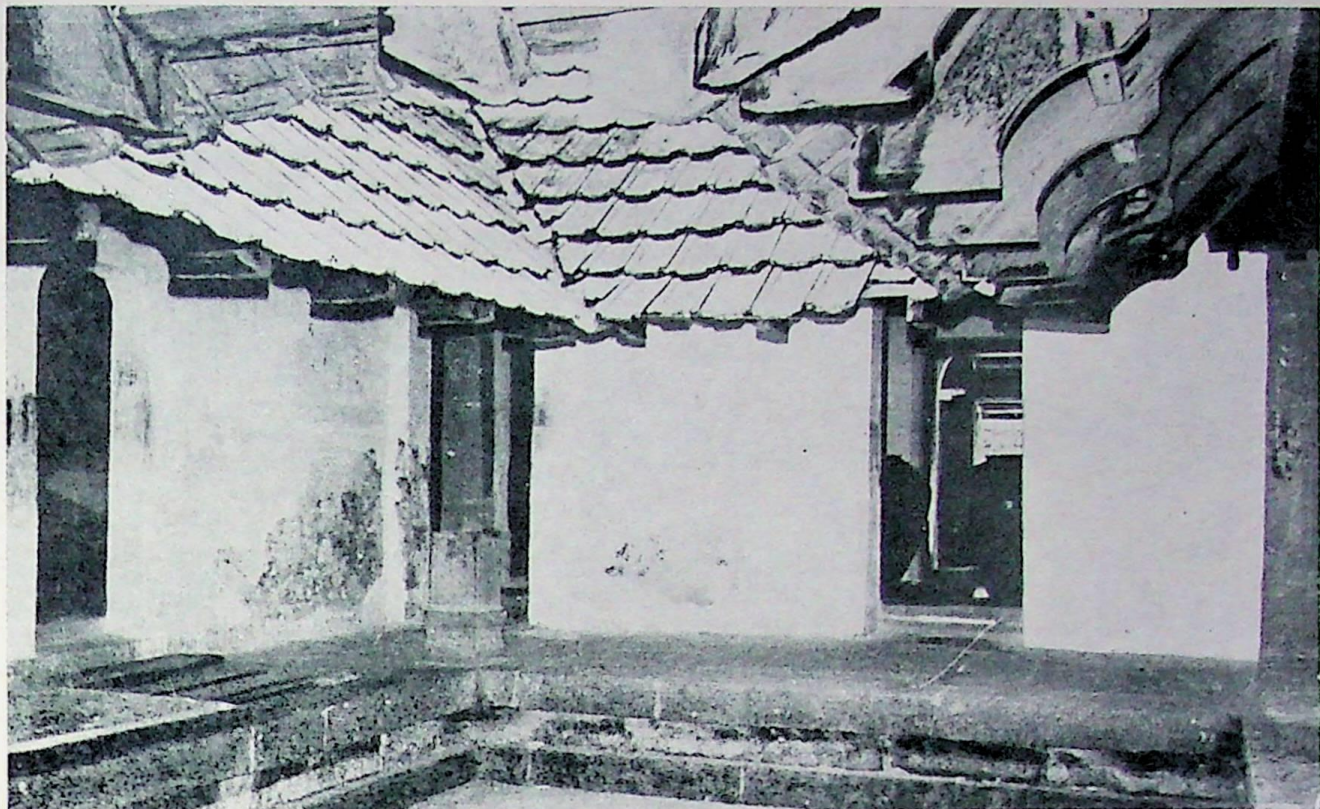



PLATE 50—One of many courtyards in the Padmanābhapuram complex.

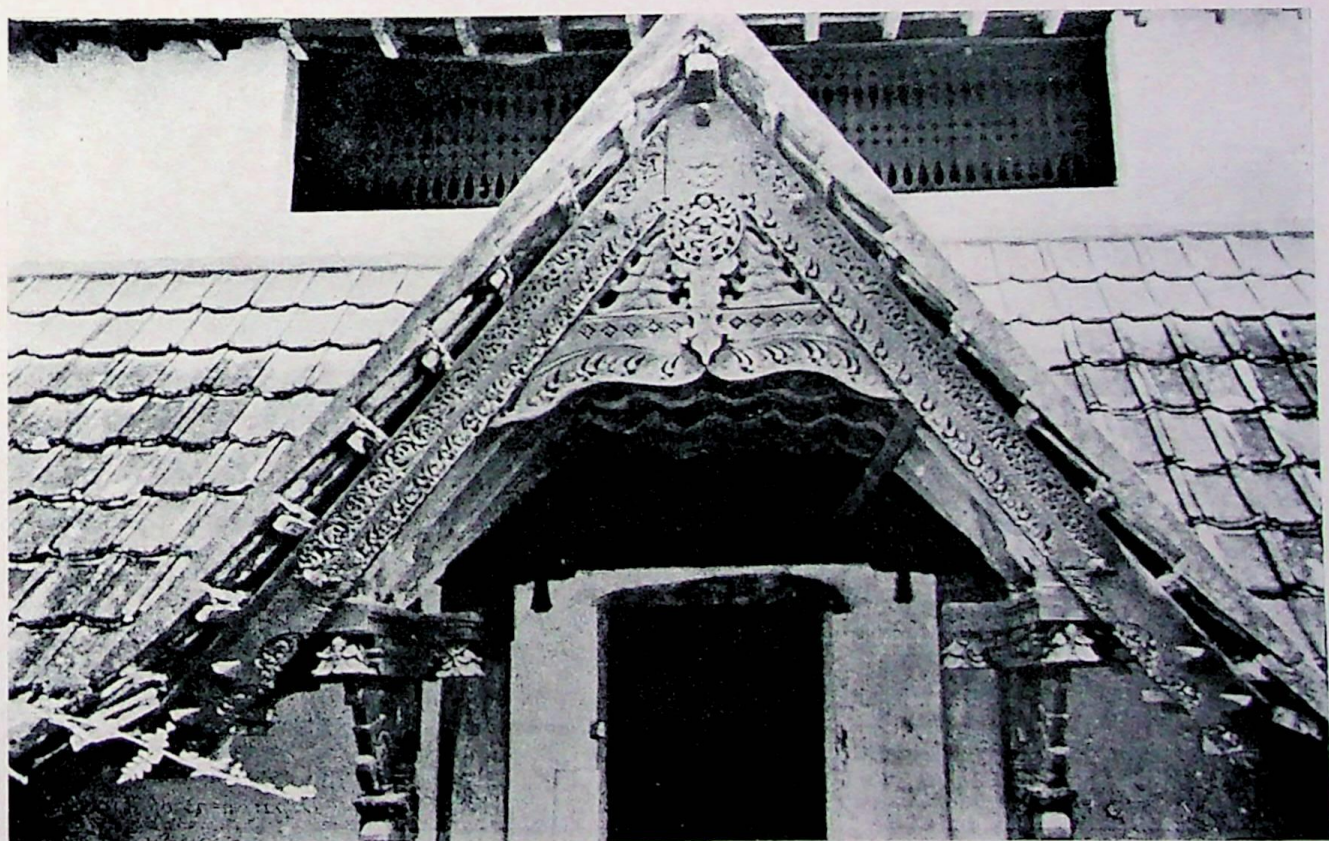



PLATE 51—Padmanābhapuram Palace gable.

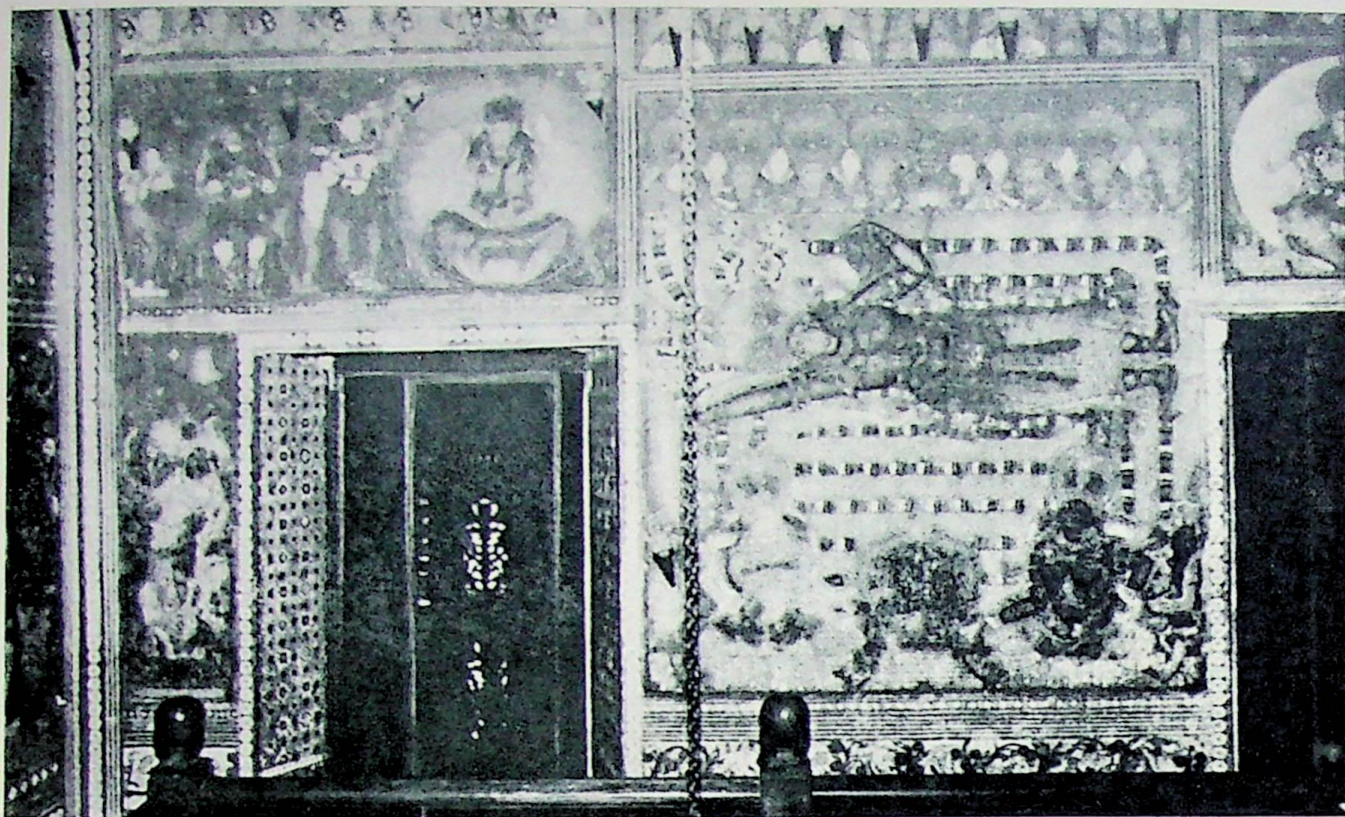



PLATE 52—Murals of the bed chamber shrine, Padmanābhapuram.

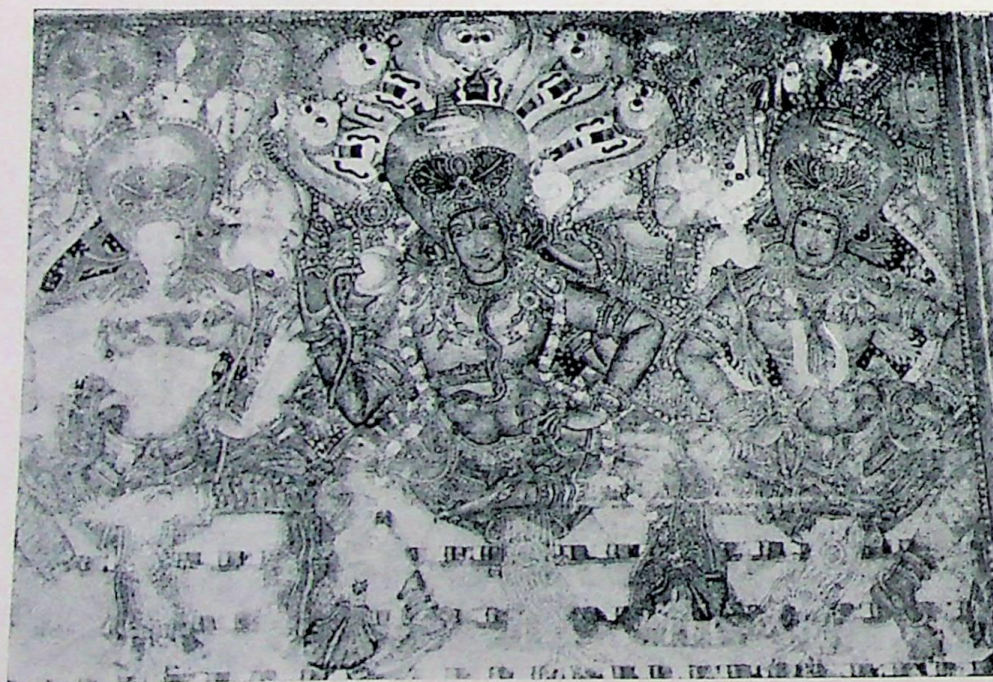



PLATE 53—Viṣṇu mural at Padmanābhapuram. (*Copyright Kerala State Department of Archaeology*)

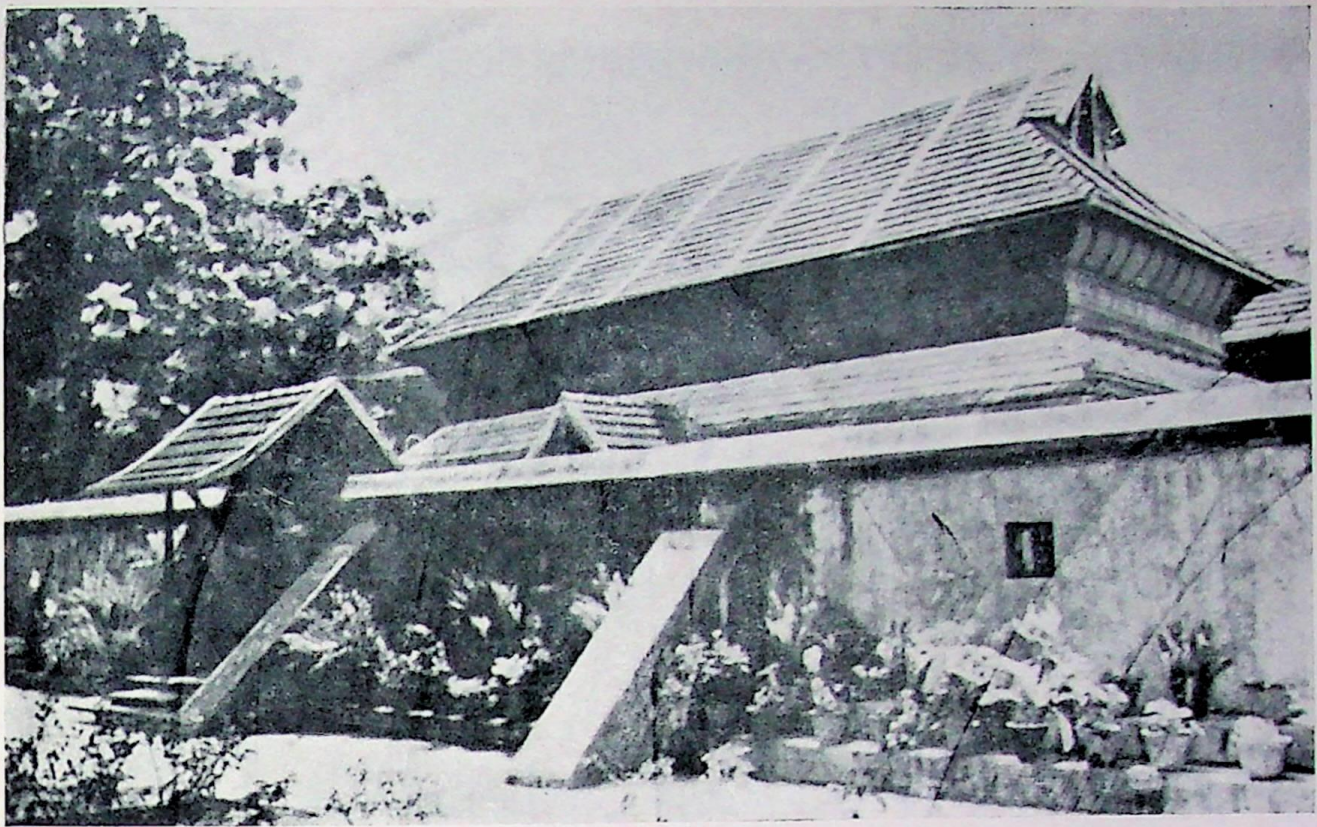



PLATE 54—The Palace of Kṛṣṇapuram.

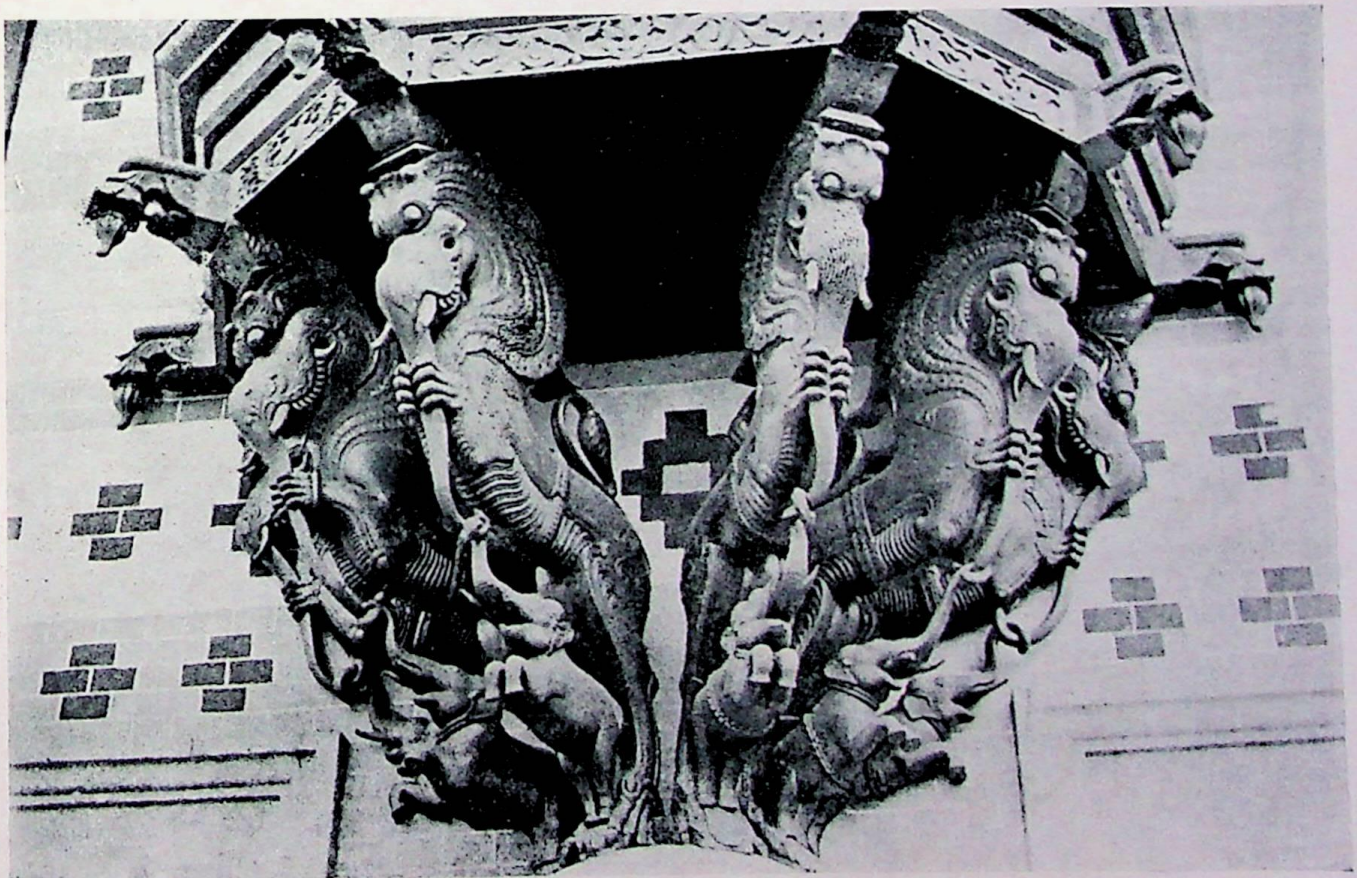



PLATE 55—Supportive brackets on the Trivandrum Museum Sculpture Gallery.

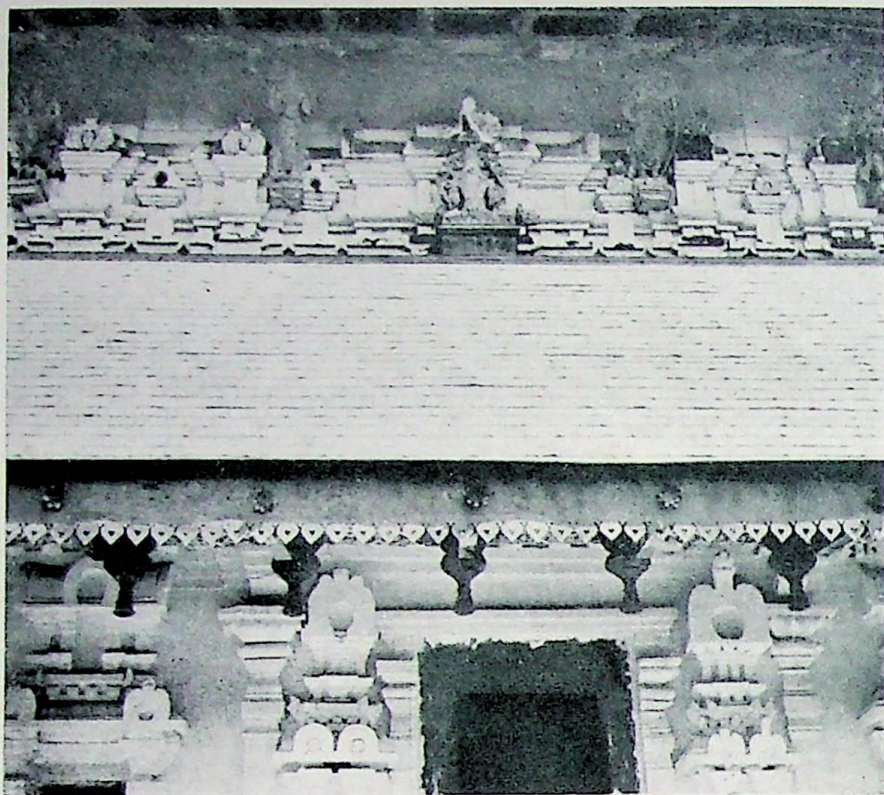



PLATE 56—Walls of the Taliparamba Śiva *srikovil*, Cannanore District.

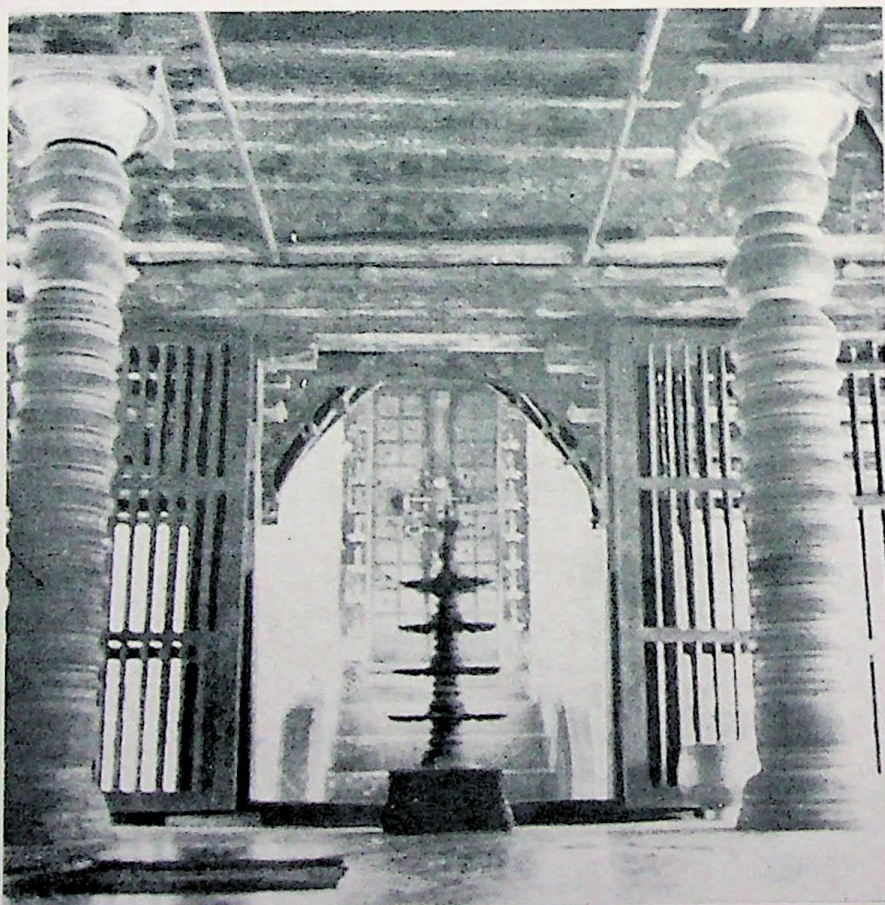



PLATE 57—Inside the *namaskāra maṇḍapa*, Taliparamba Śiva temple.

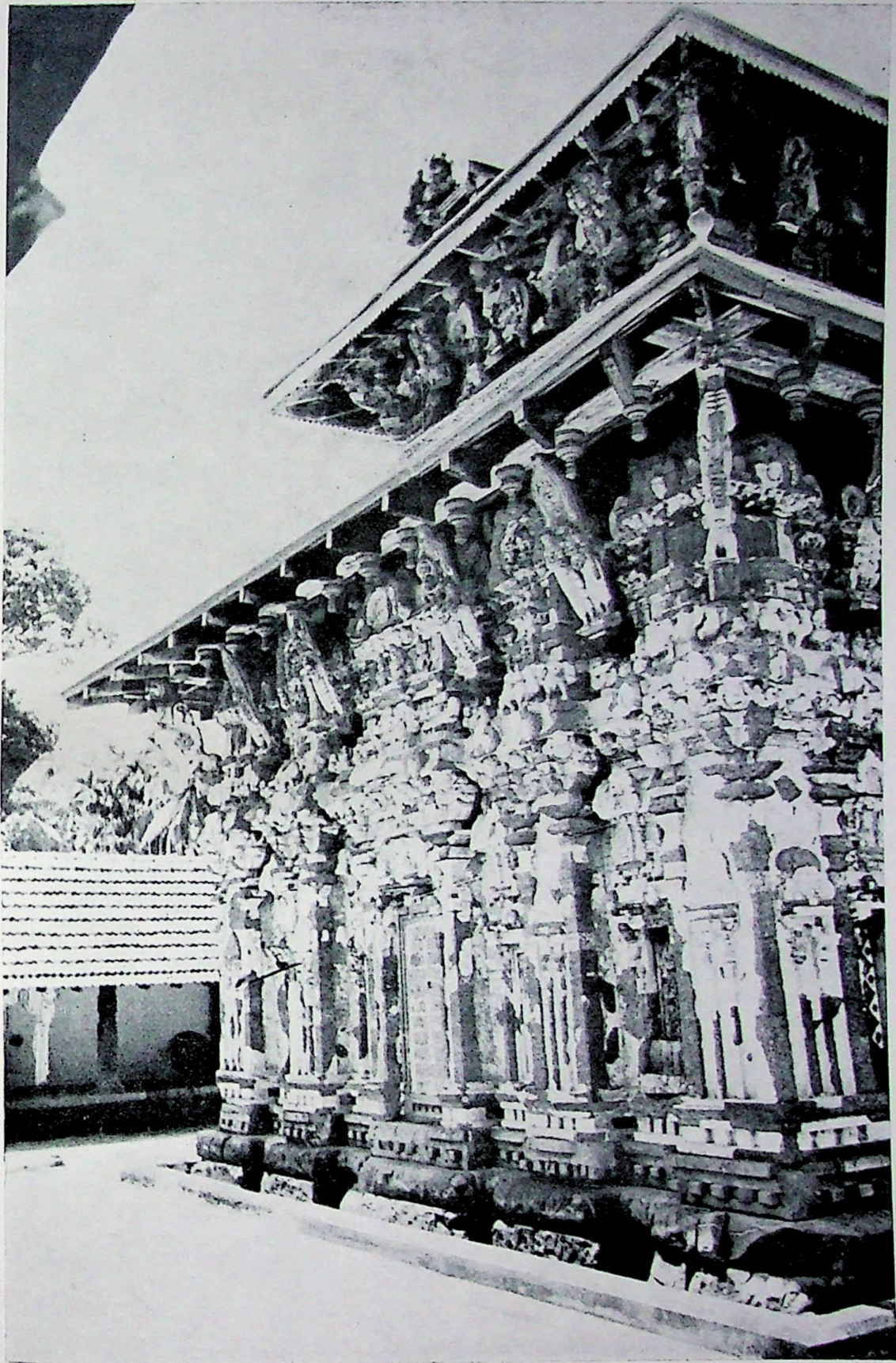



PLATE 58—Exterior of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple, Cannanore District.

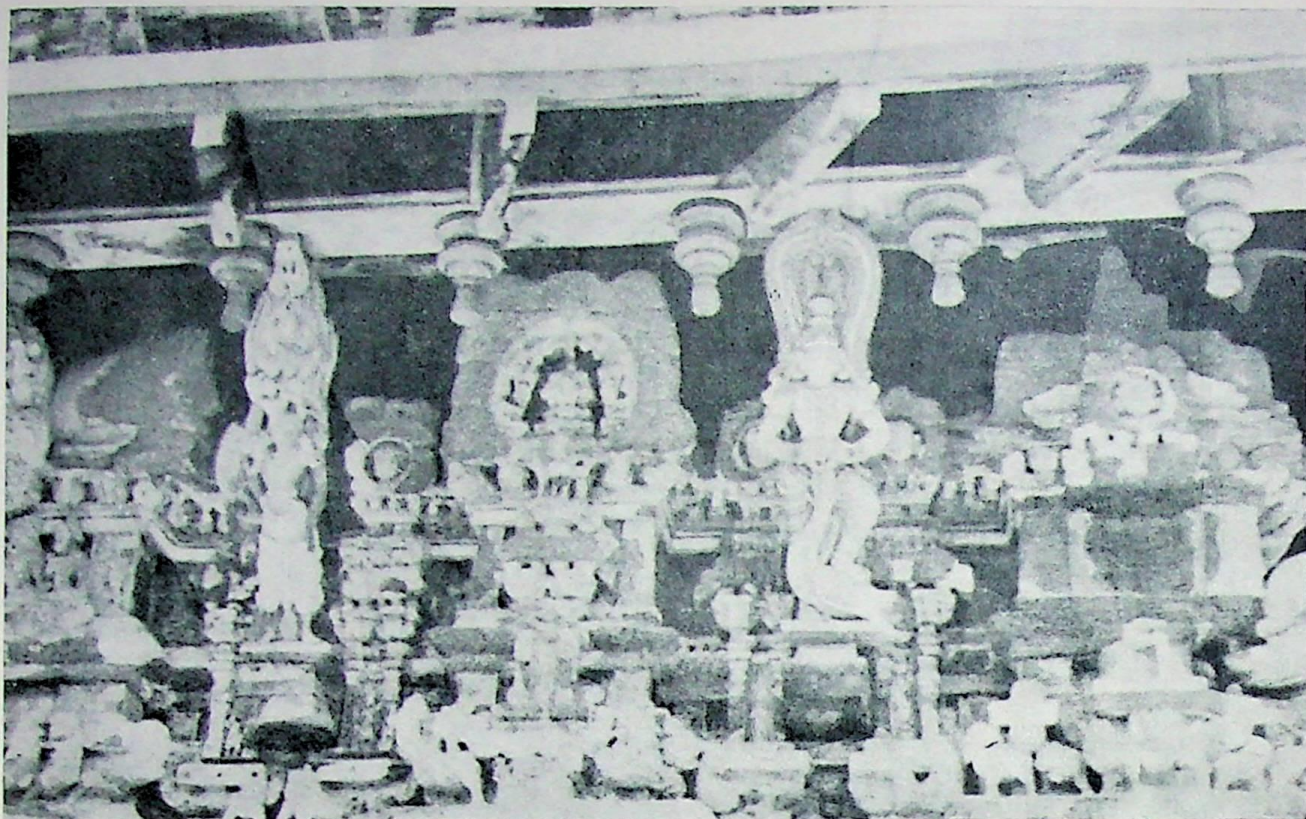



PLATE 59—Roof brackets of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple.

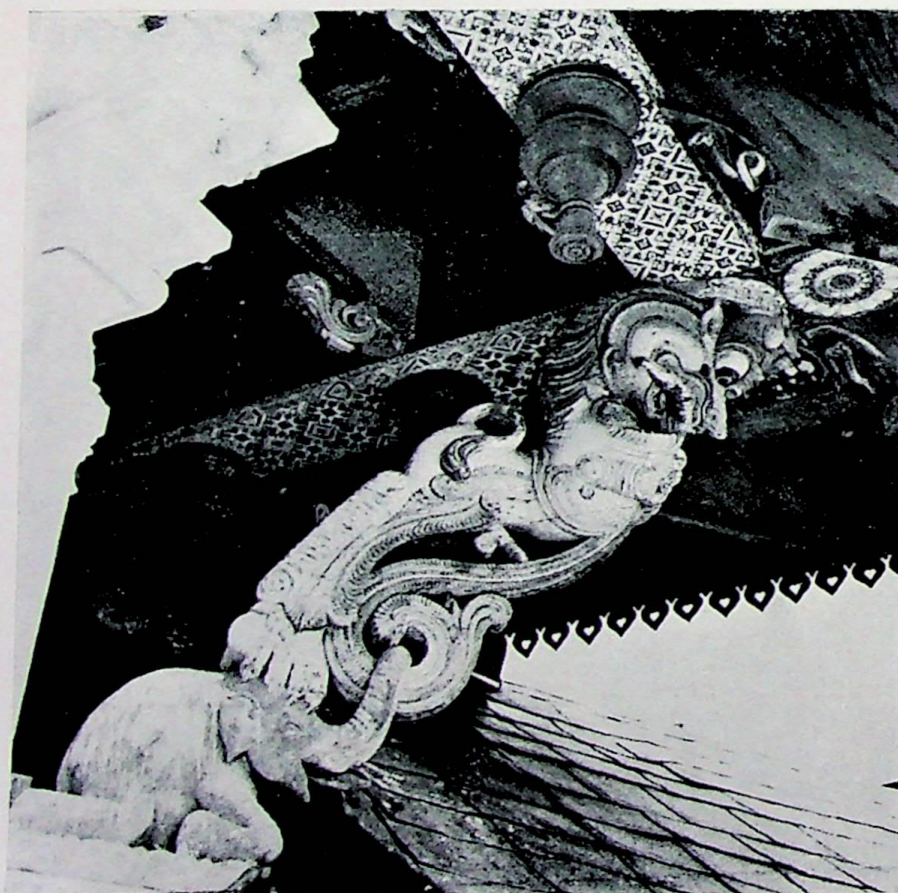



PLATE 60—Corner bracket support of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa temple.

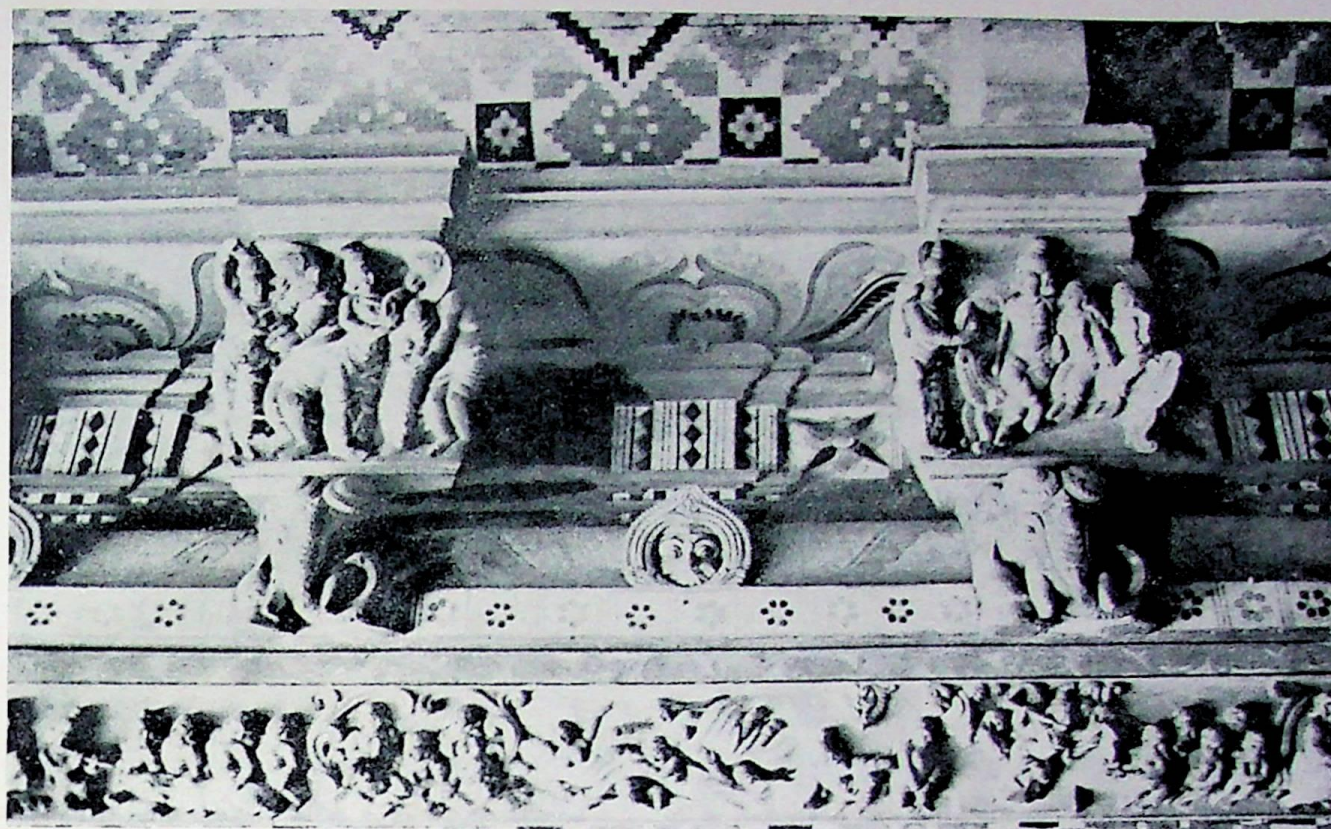



PLATE 61—*Namaskāra maṇḍapa* brackets of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa Temple.

PLATE 62—Hanumant relief sculpture of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa.

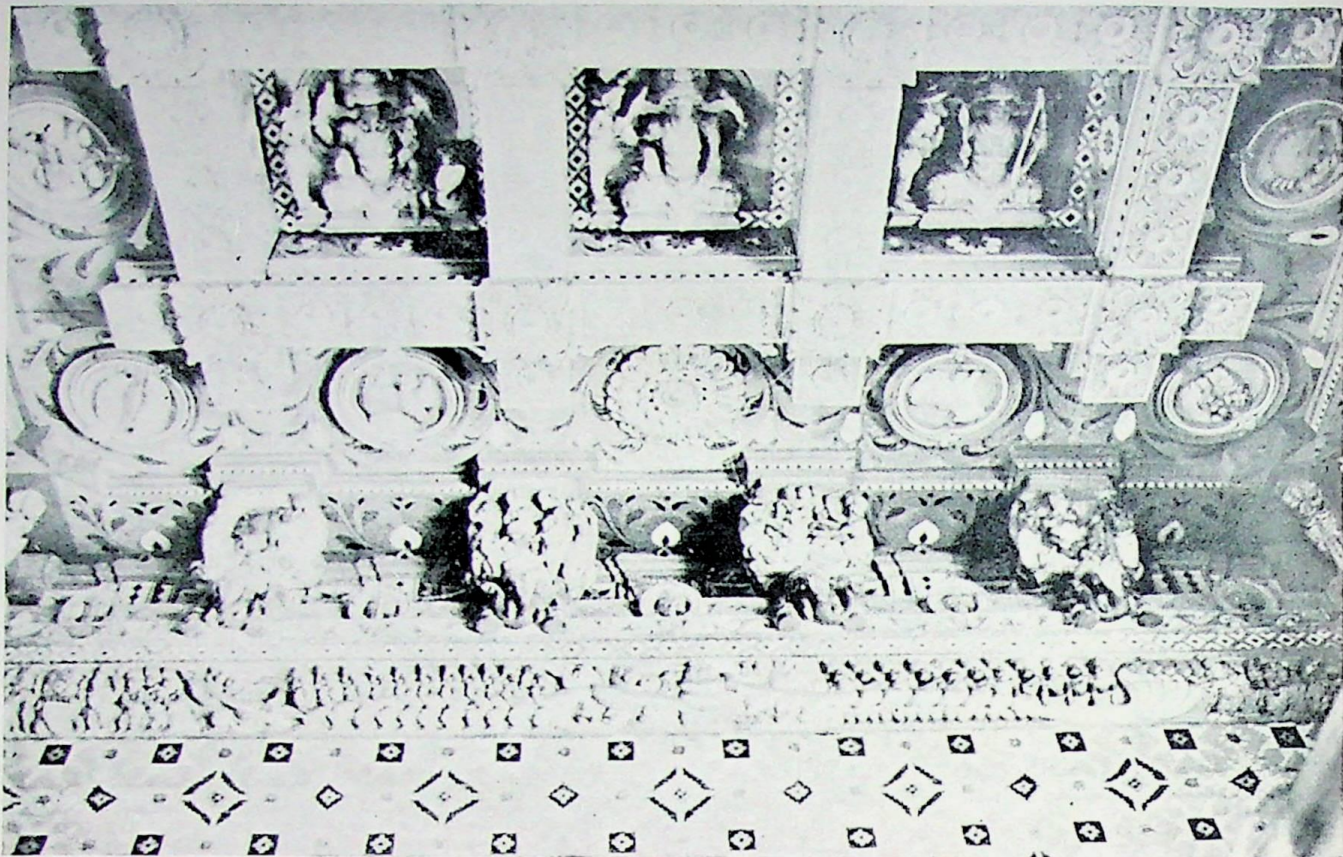



PLATE 63—Ceiling carvings in the *maṇḍapa* of Trichambaram Kṛṣṇa.

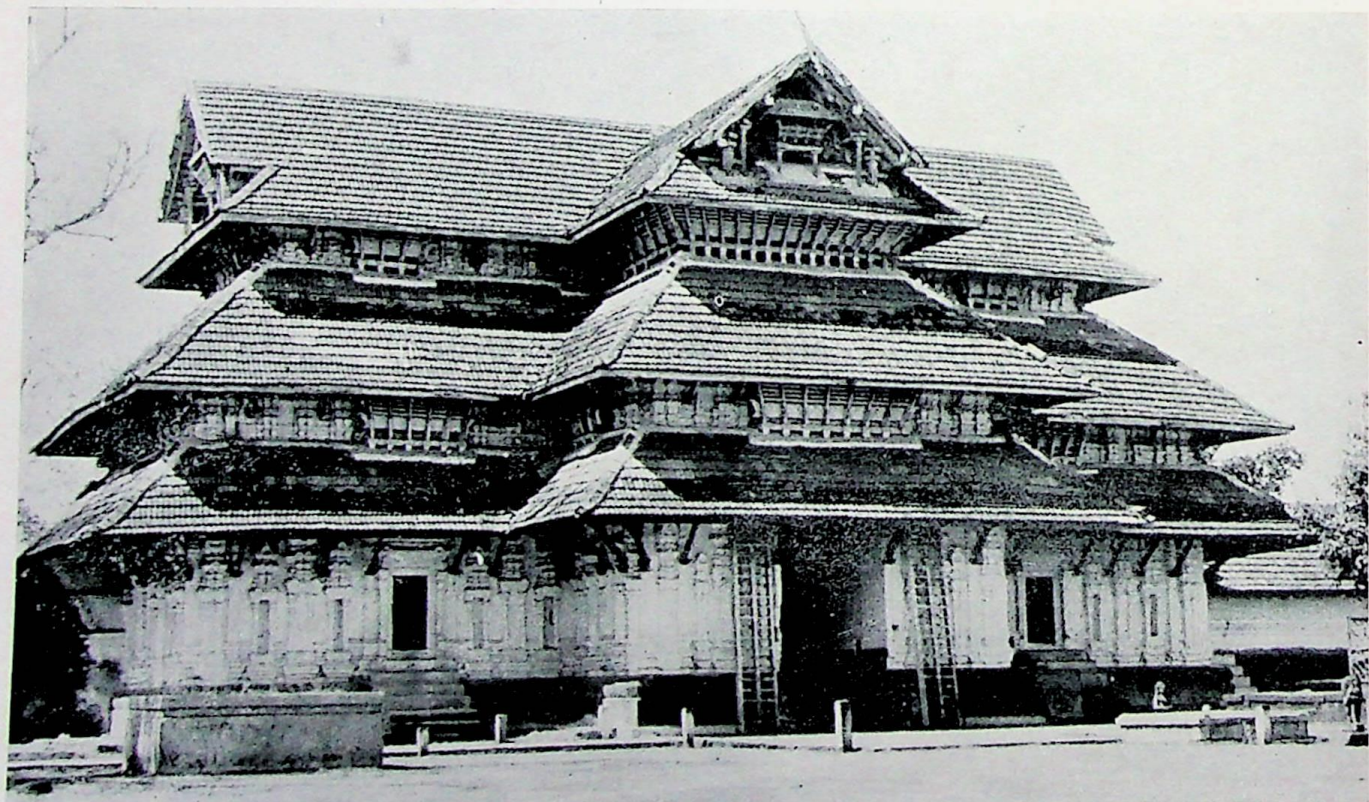



PLATE 64—Entry *gopura* of the great temple of Trichur city.

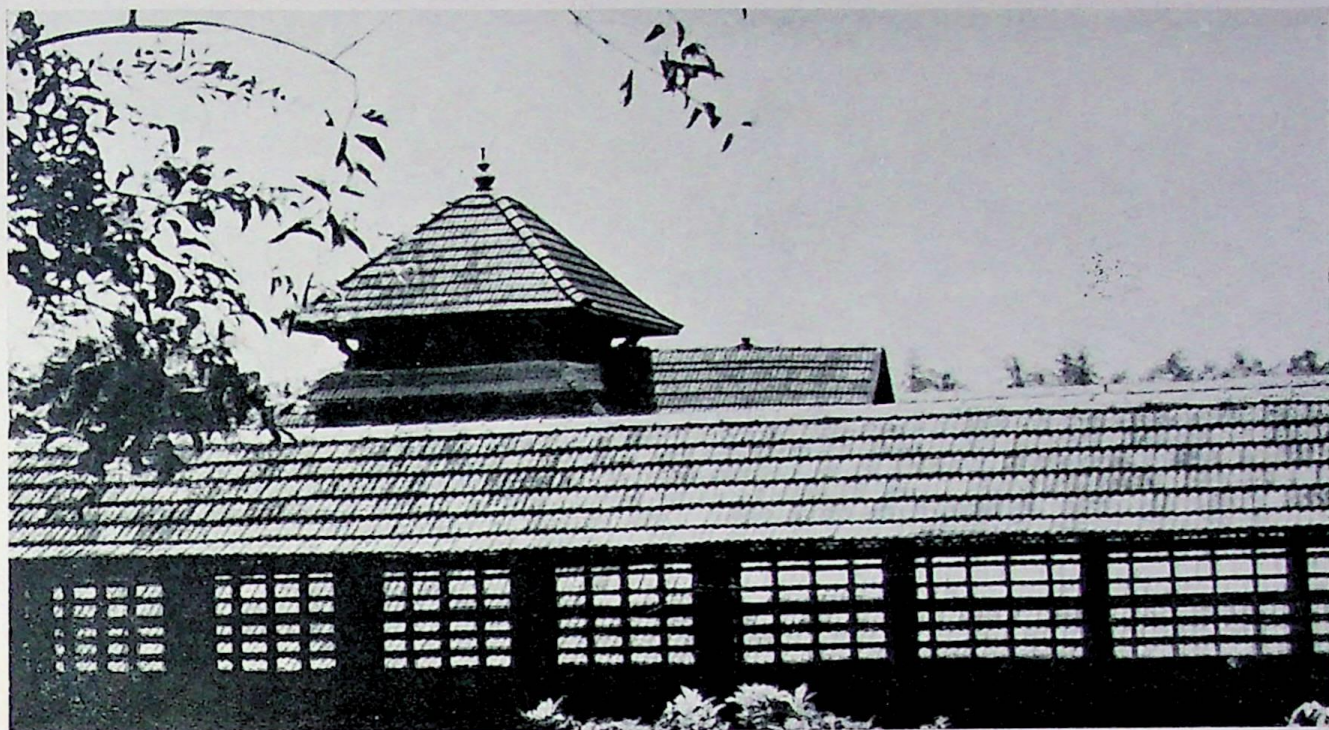



PLATE 65—The Tali temple, Calicut, Kozhikode District.

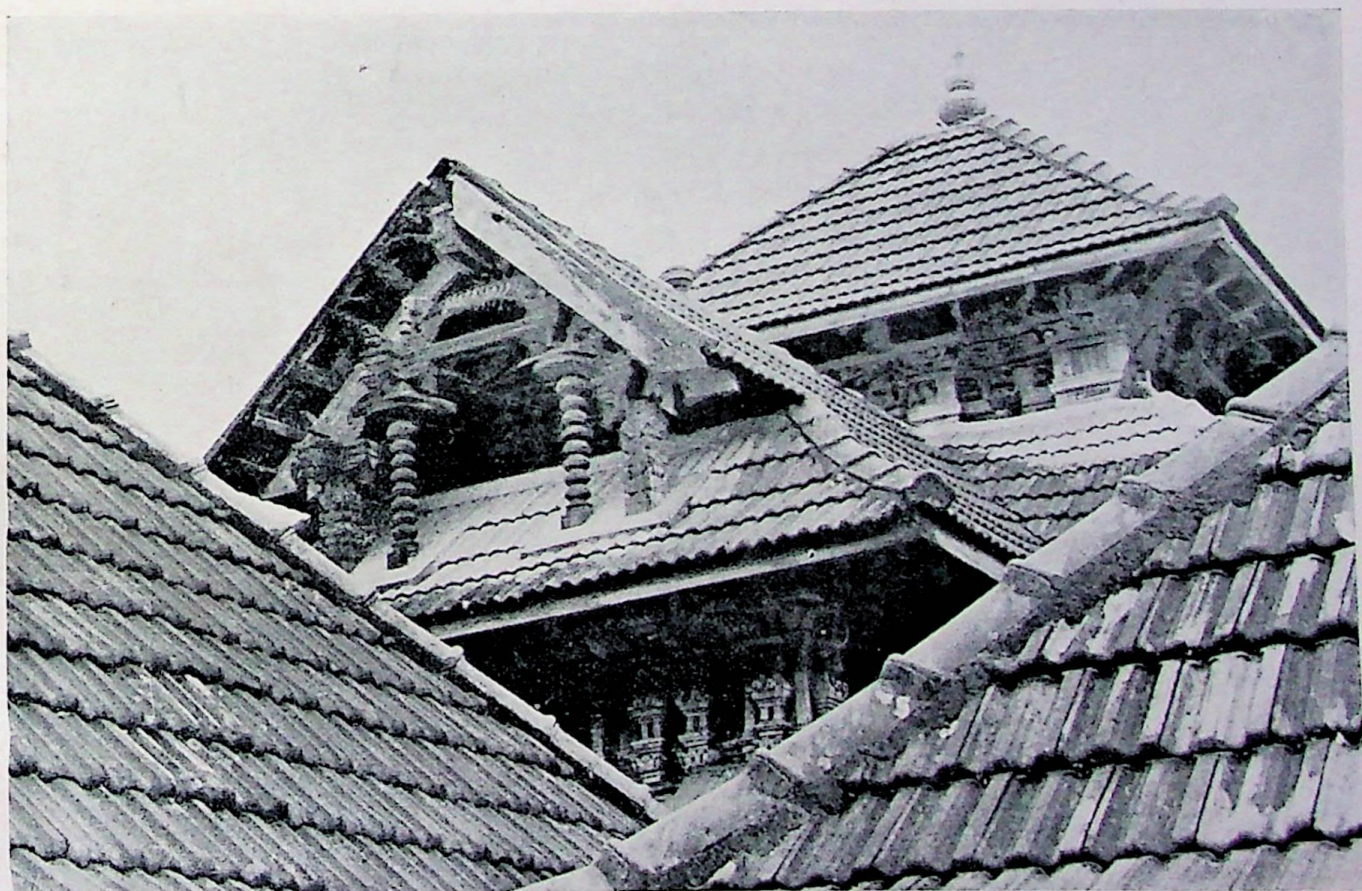



PLATE 66—Intersecting roofs of the Tali temple, Calicut

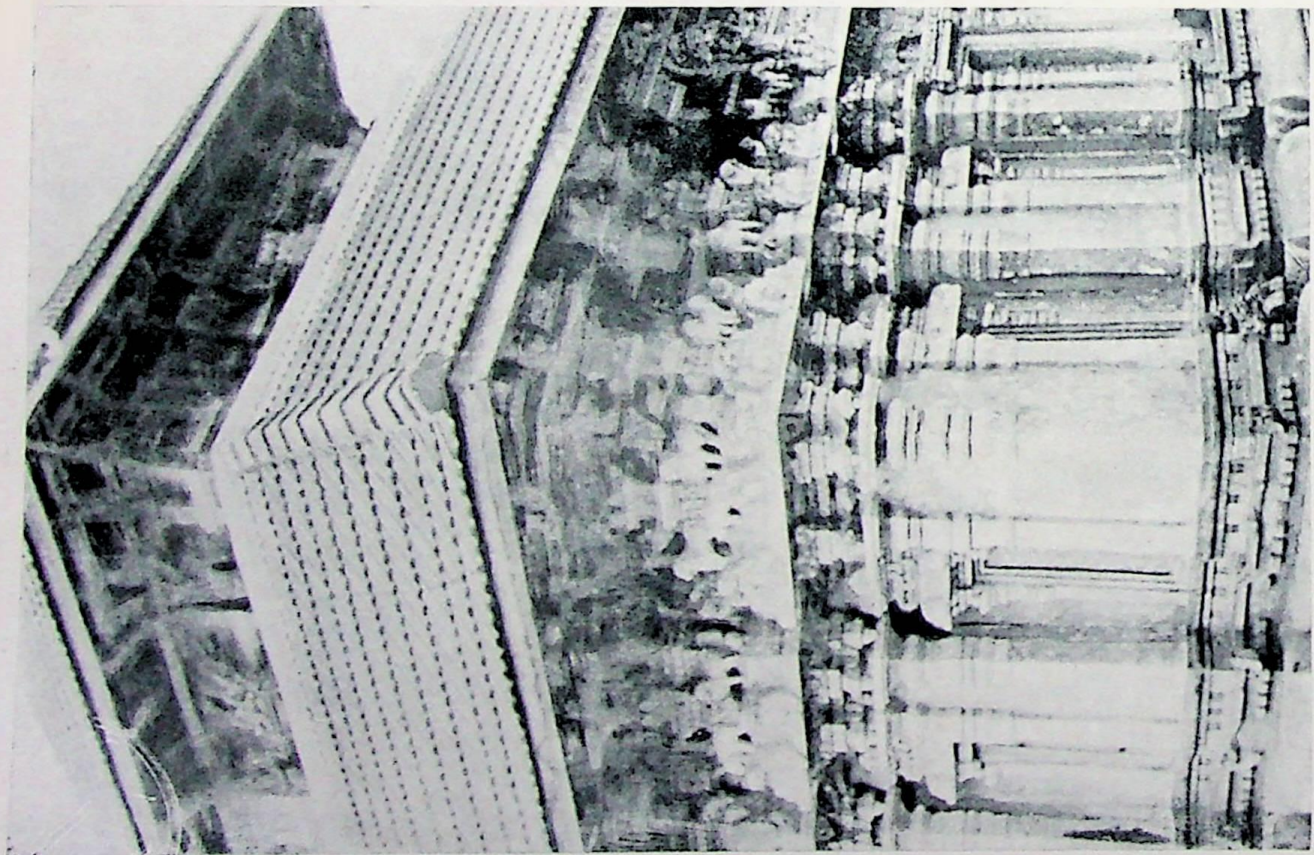



PLATE 67—Walls of the Tali *srikovil*, Calicut.

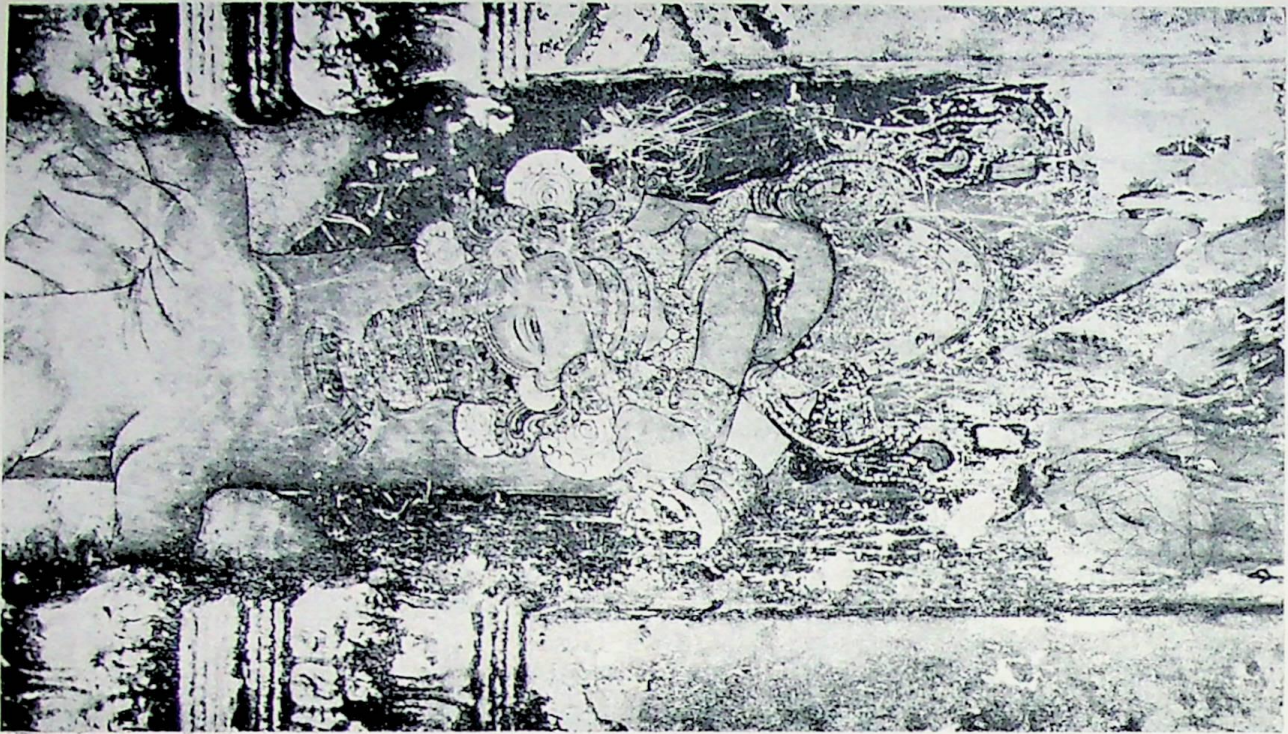



PLATE 68—Kṛṣṇa Panel on the *srikovil* of the Tali temple, Calicut.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

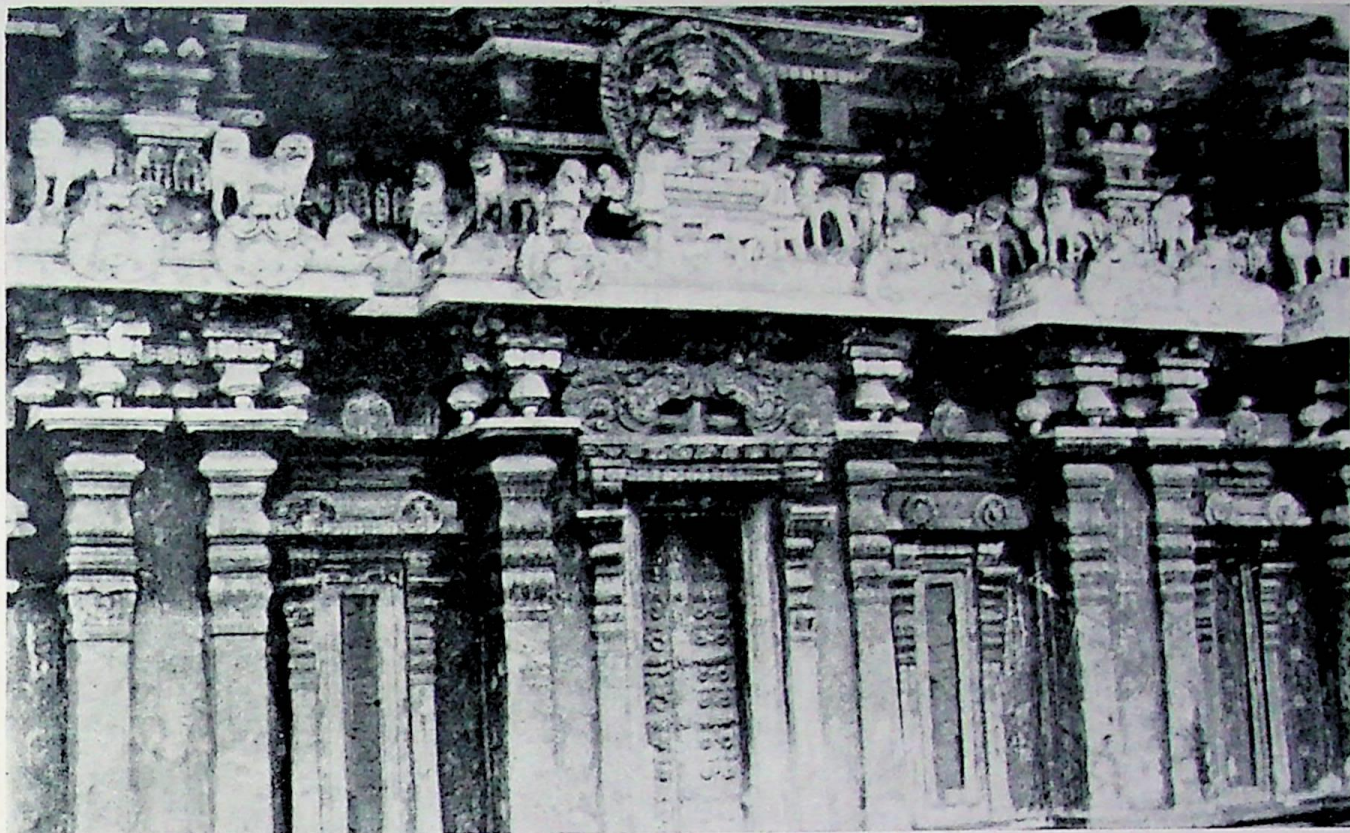



PLATE 69—*Srikovil* surface, Tali temple, Calicut.

PLATE 70—Detail of the *srikovil* wall at the Tali temple in Calicut. (*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

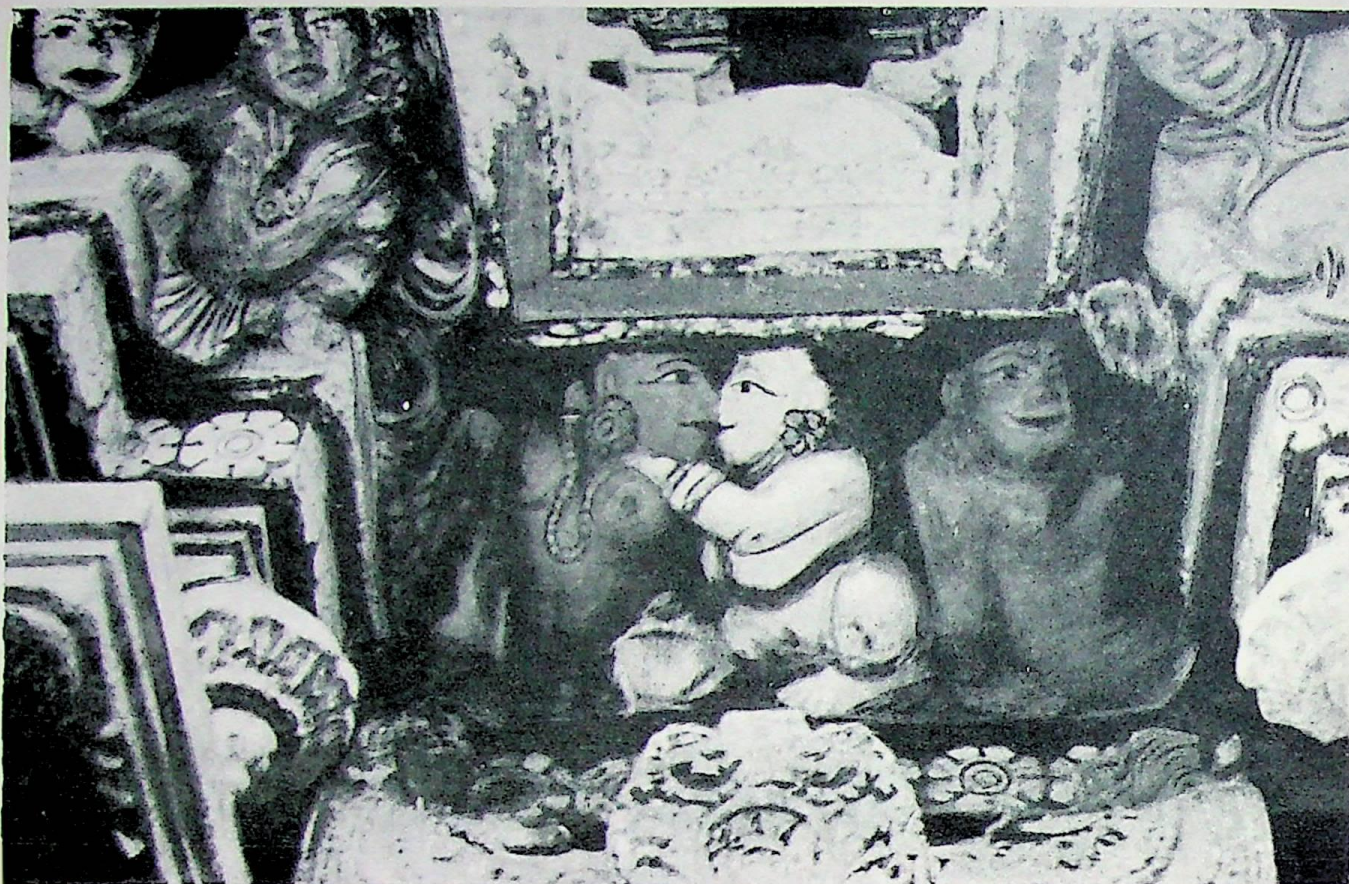



PLATE 71—Cornice figures of the Tali temple, Calicut.

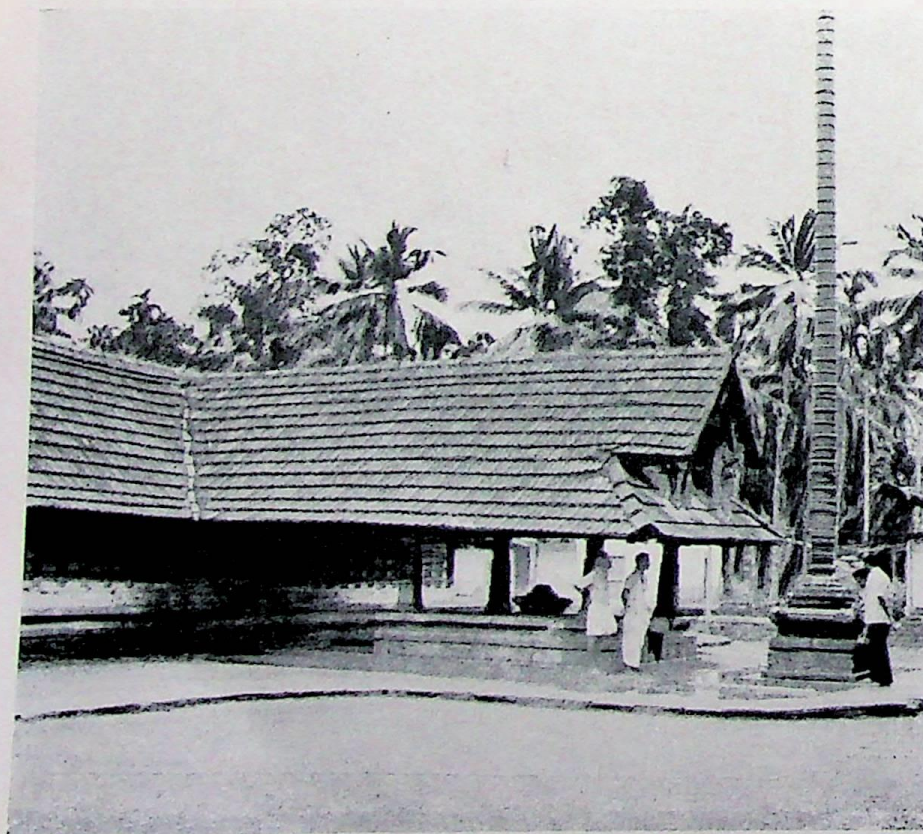



PLATE 72—Within the outer wall of the Karātt temple, Kazhikode District.

PLATE 73—Gable detail at the outer *maṇḍapa* of the Karātt temple.

PLATE 74—Lintel Carving of Lakṣmī, Karātt temple.

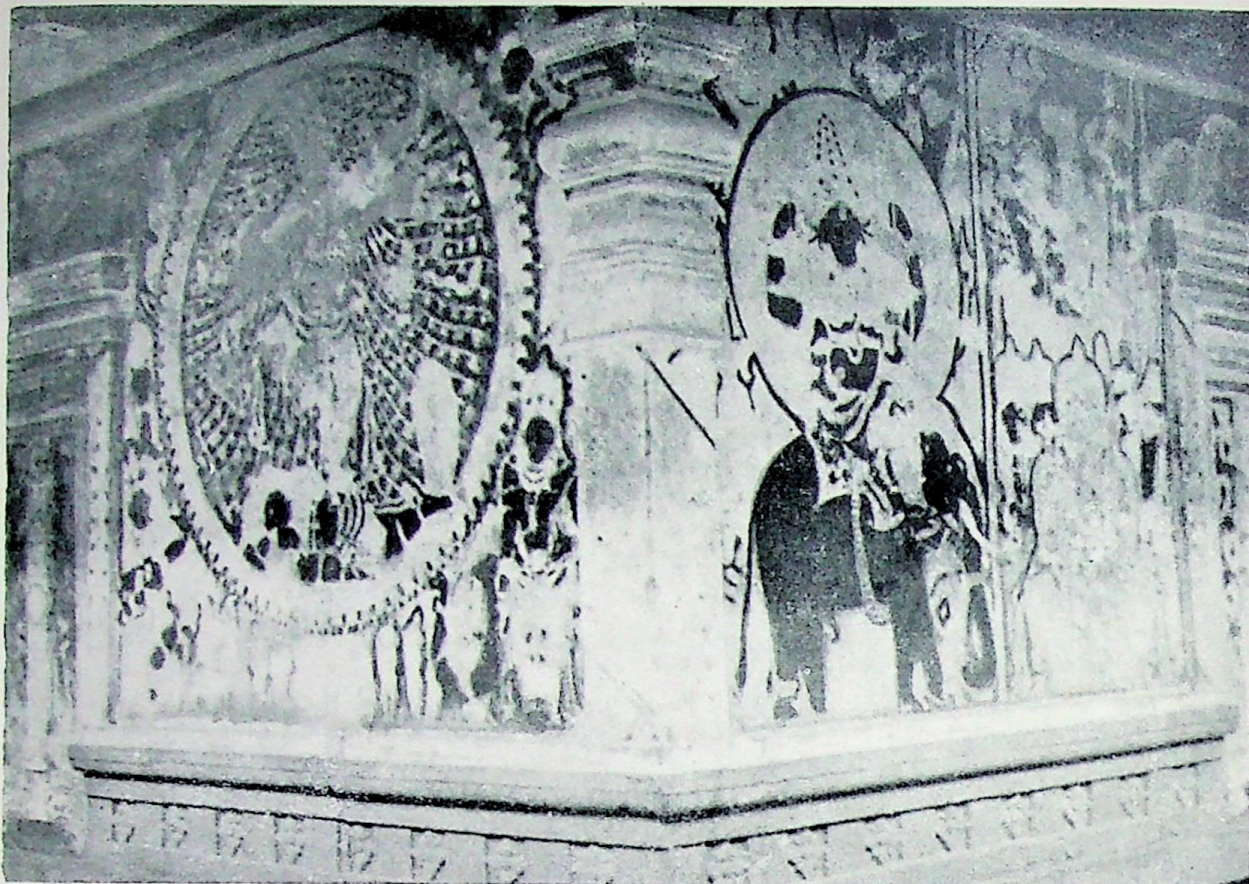



PLATE 75—Murals on the *srikovil* Karātt kṛṣṇa temple.

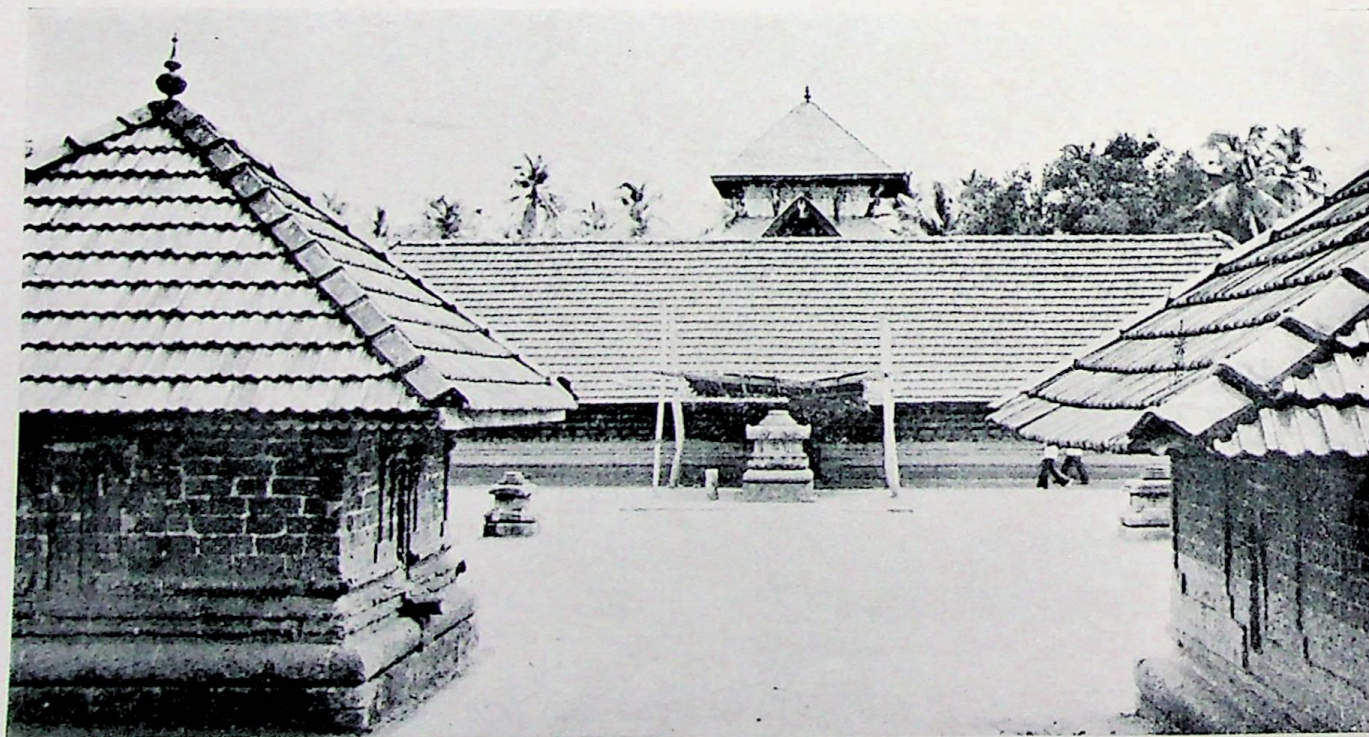



PLATE 76—Ponmeri Śiva temple, Villiappally, Kozhikode District, with temporary shelter over *balipītha*.

PLATE 77—Roofs of Ponmeri Śiva temple, Kozhikode District.

PLATE 78—Viṣṇu carved wooden image beside the *srikovil* entrance, Ponmeri Śiva temple.

PLATE 79—*Balipītha* before Ponmeri Śiva temple.

PLATE 80—Within the Ponmeri Śiva inner court.

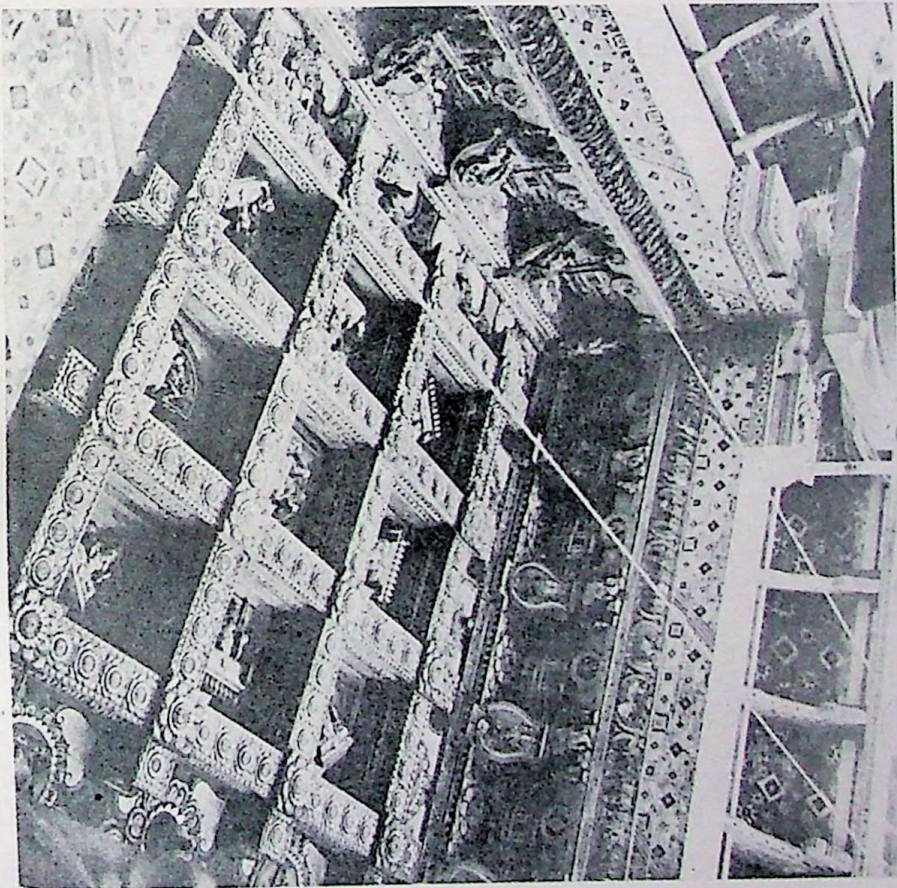
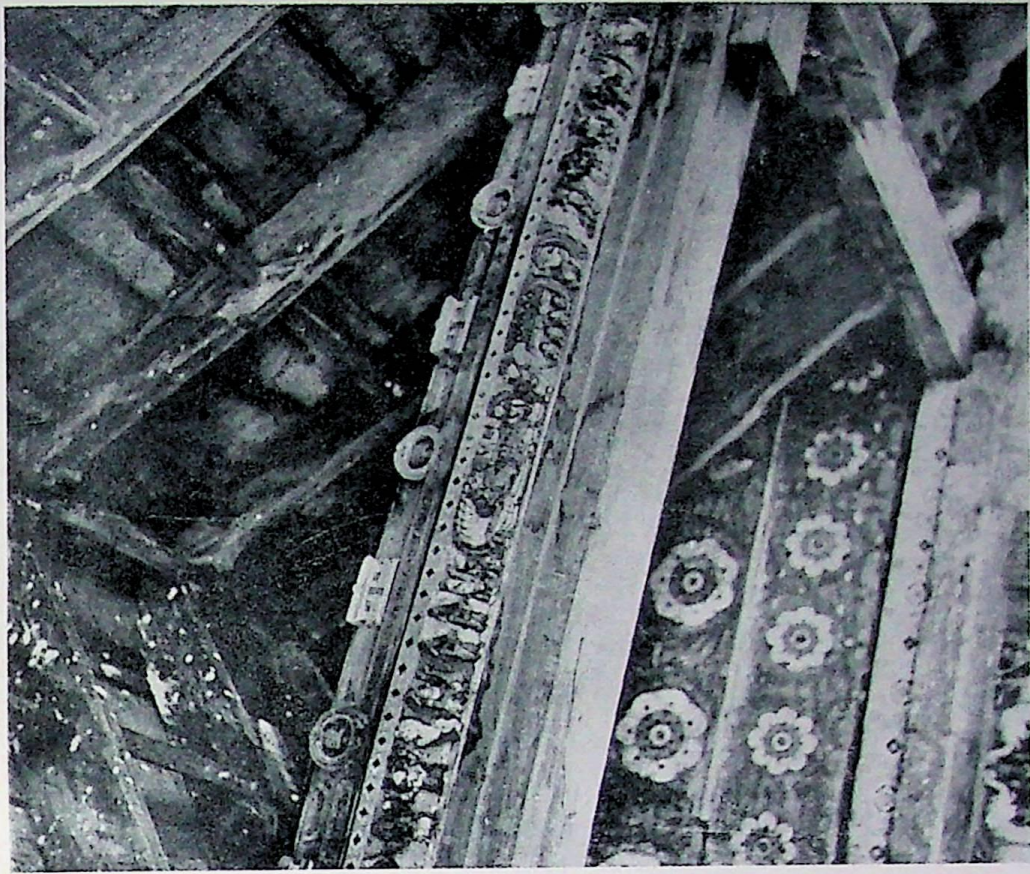



PLATE 81—*Namaskāra maṇḍapa* ceiling, Ponmeri Siva temple.

PLATE 82—Churning of the Sea of Milk at Ponmeri Śiva temple.

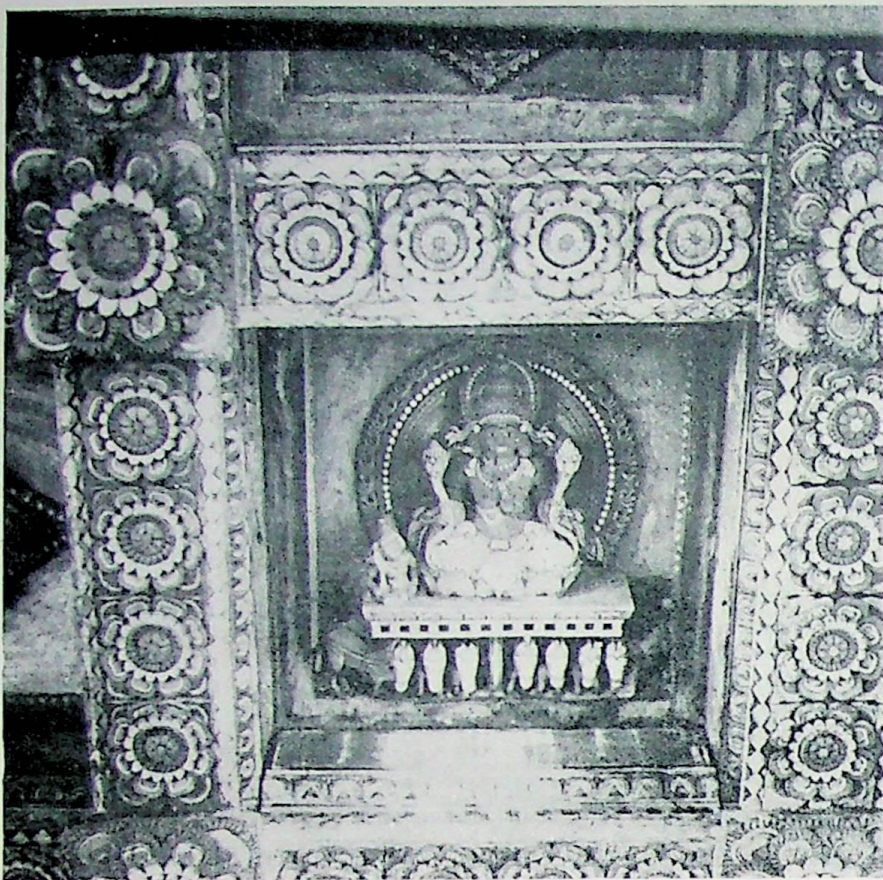



PLATE 83—Sūria at the centre of the Ponmeri Śiva *maṇḍapa*.

PLATE 84—Tiruvannu Śiva temple, Kozhikode District.

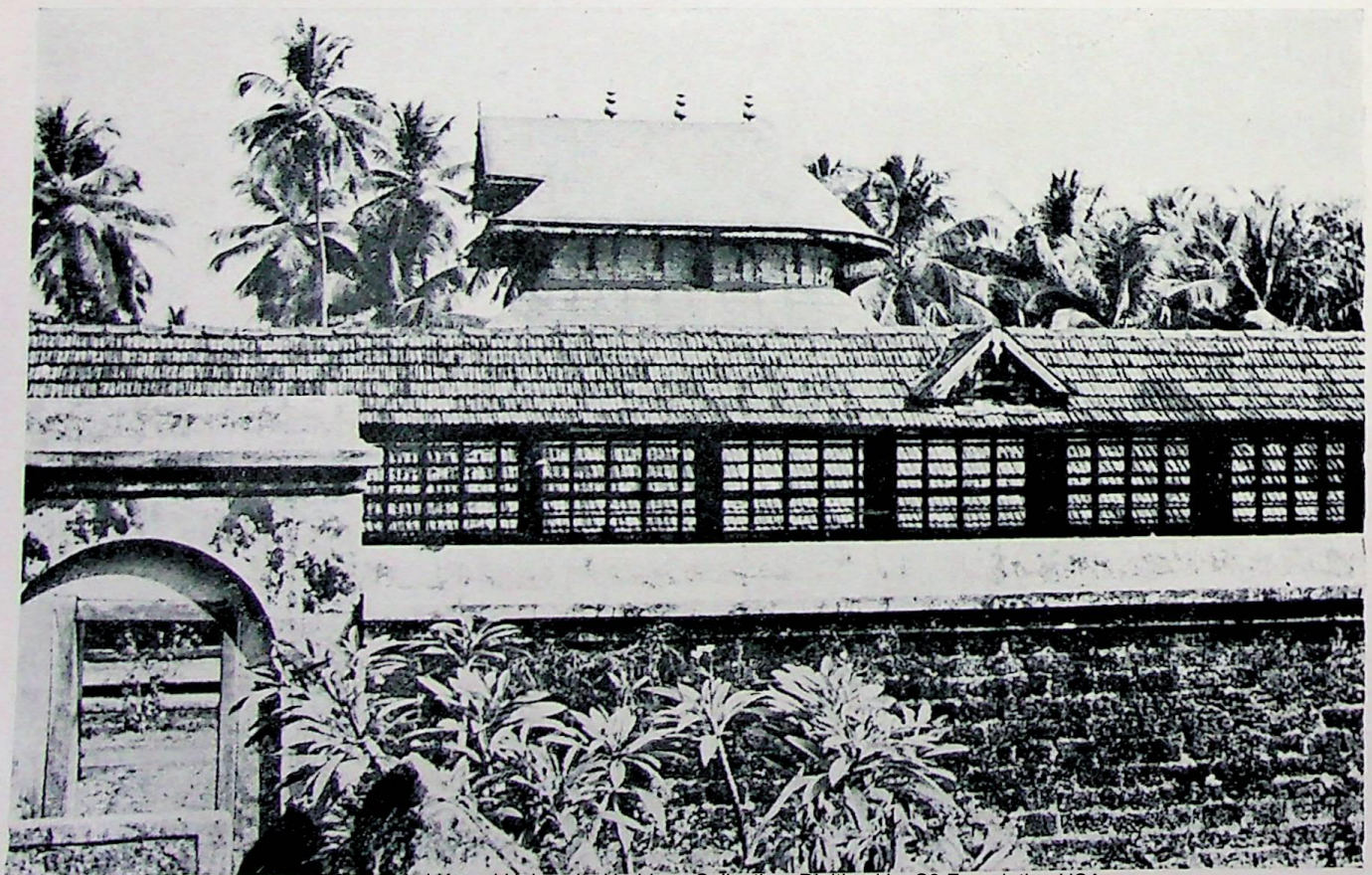



PLATE 85—Court Space in a house near the temple of Tiruvannur Śiva.

PLATE 86—Multiple *Stūpi* forms, Karikkad kṣetram, Malappuram District.

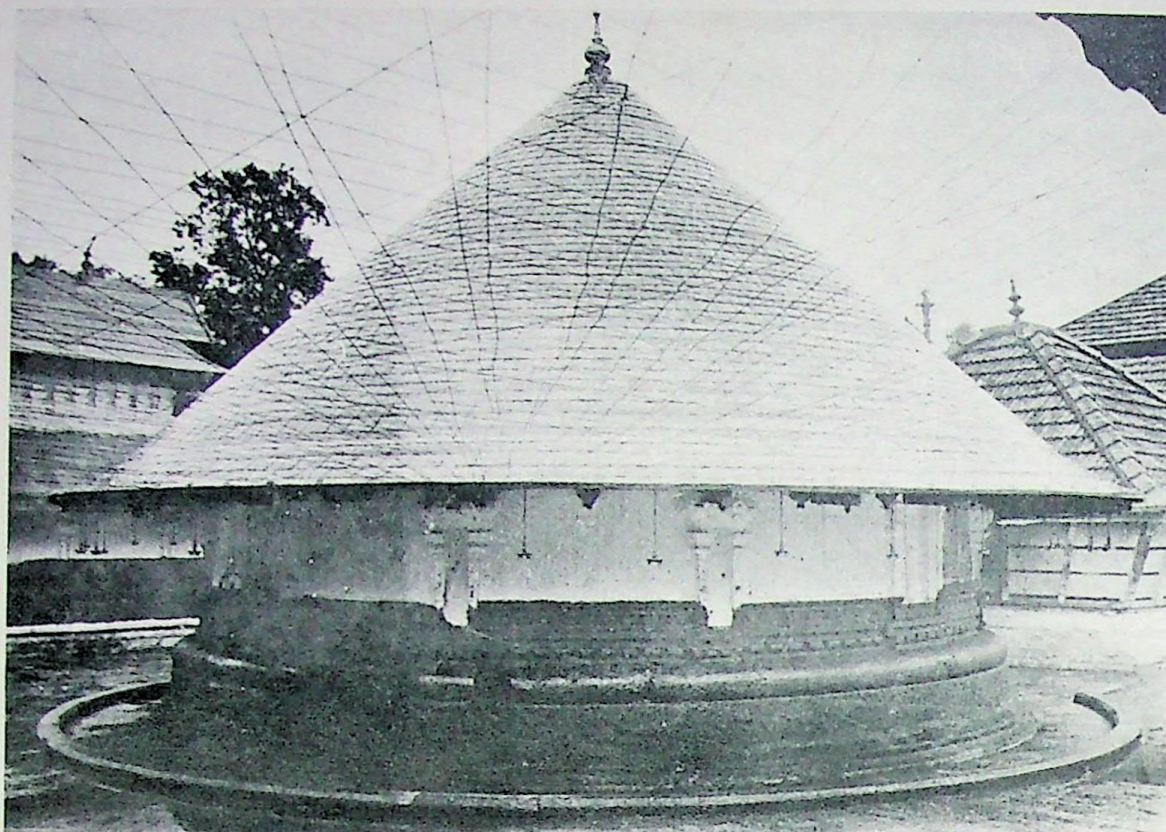



PLATE 87—Circular temple of Siva, Tiruvegappura Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa, Palghat District.

PLATE 88—The *Kūttambalam* of Tiruvegappura Saṅkaranārāyaṇa.

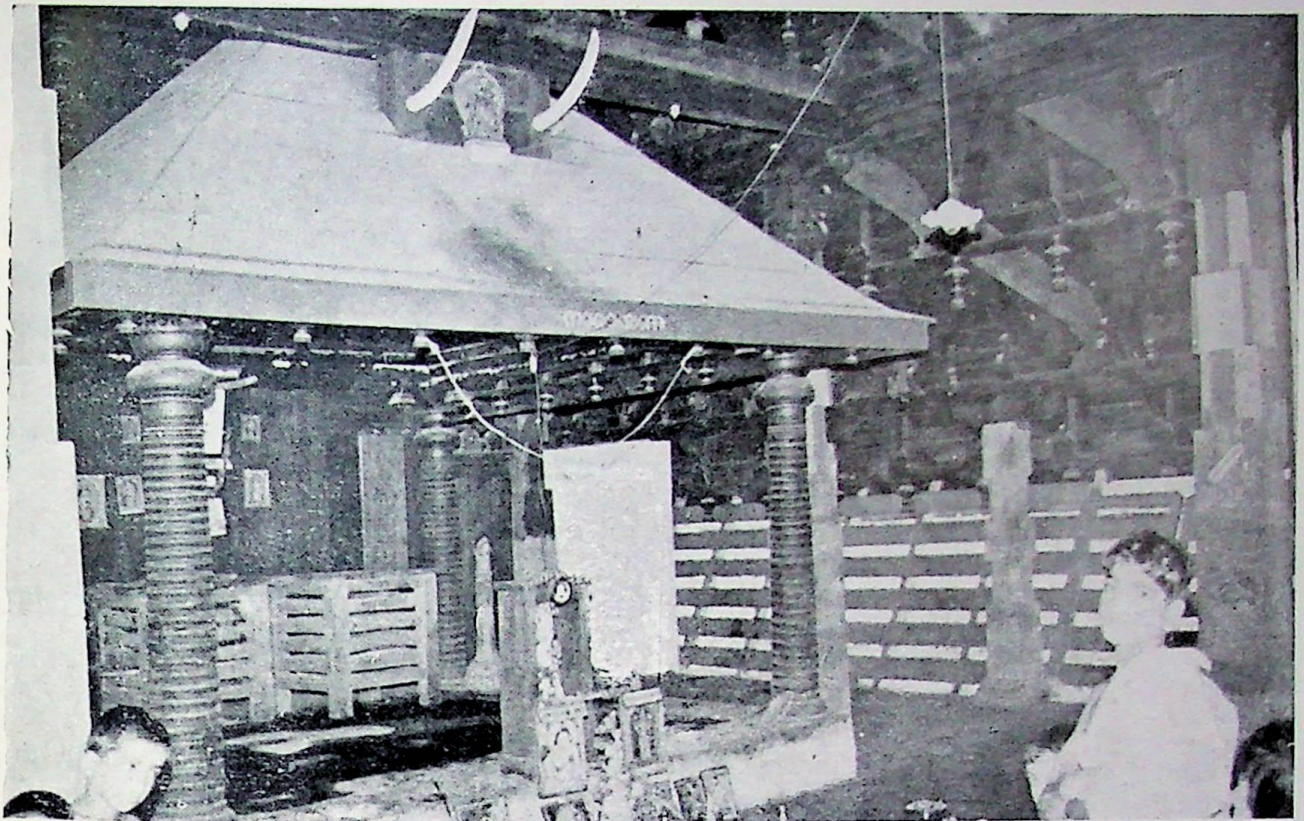



PLATE 89—Stage area in the Tiruvegappura Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa theatre.

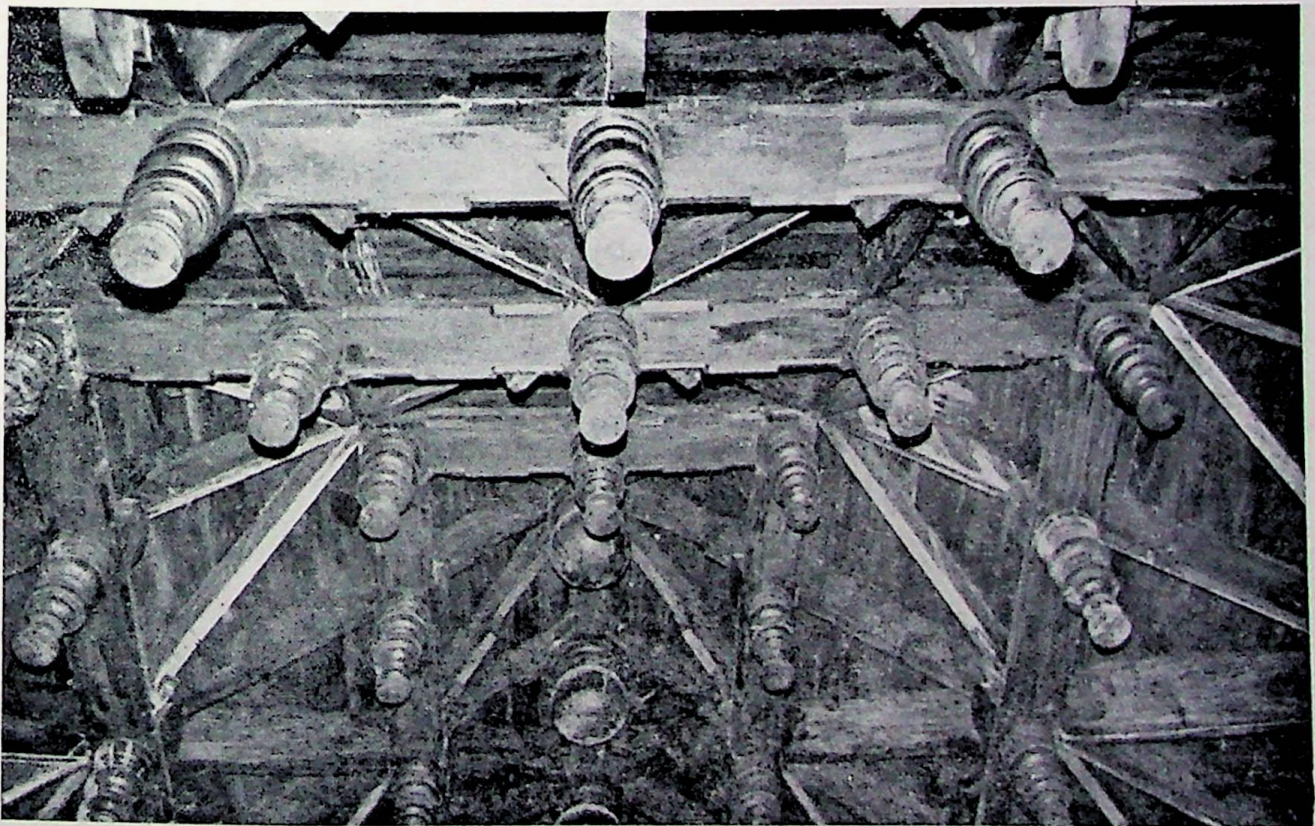



PLATE 90—Ceiling detail, the *Kūttambalam*, Tiruvegappura Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa.

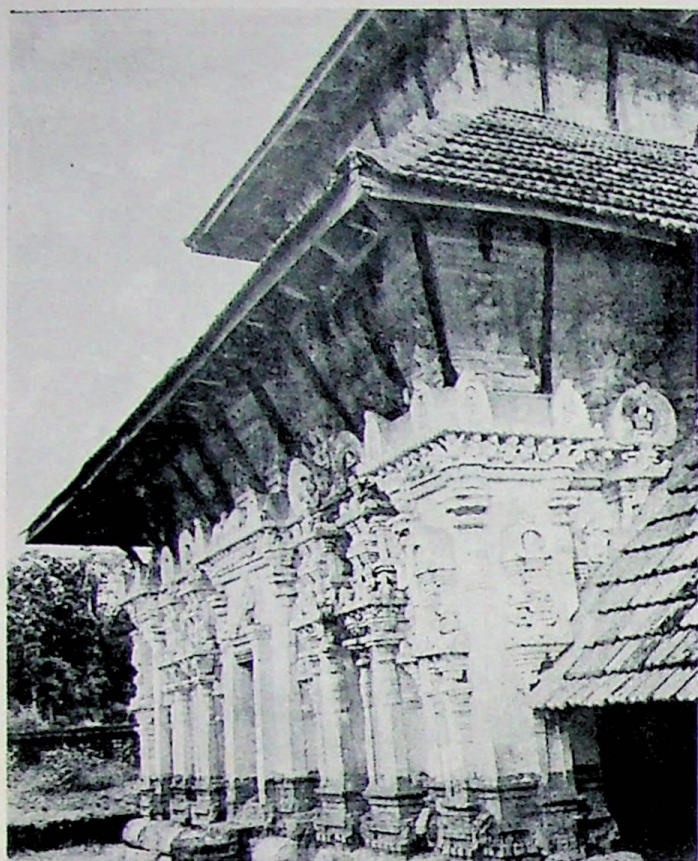



PLATE 91—Taliyil Śiva at Ongallur, Palghat District.

PLATE 92—Wall surface of Taliyil Śiva, laterite with stucco.

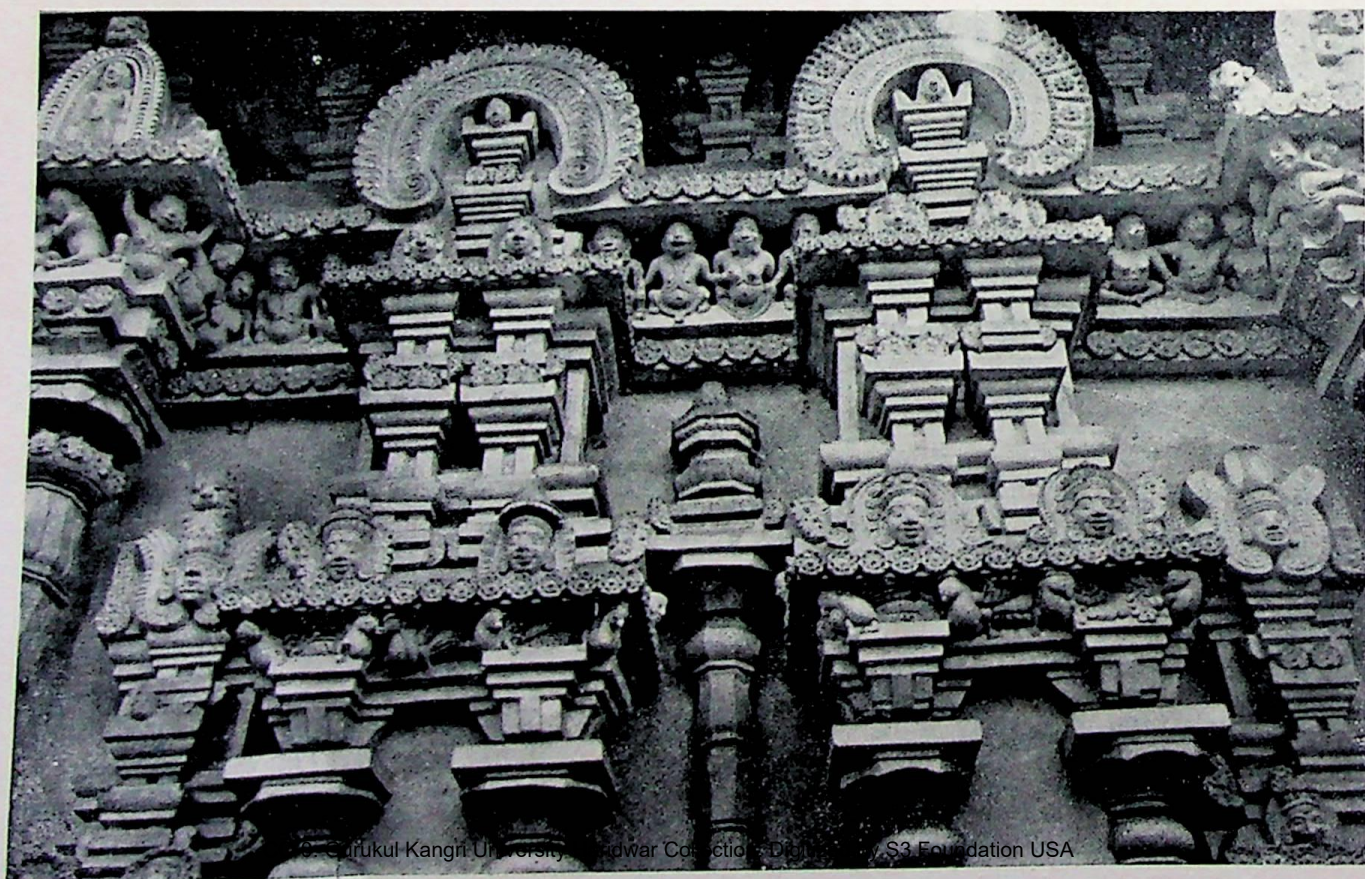
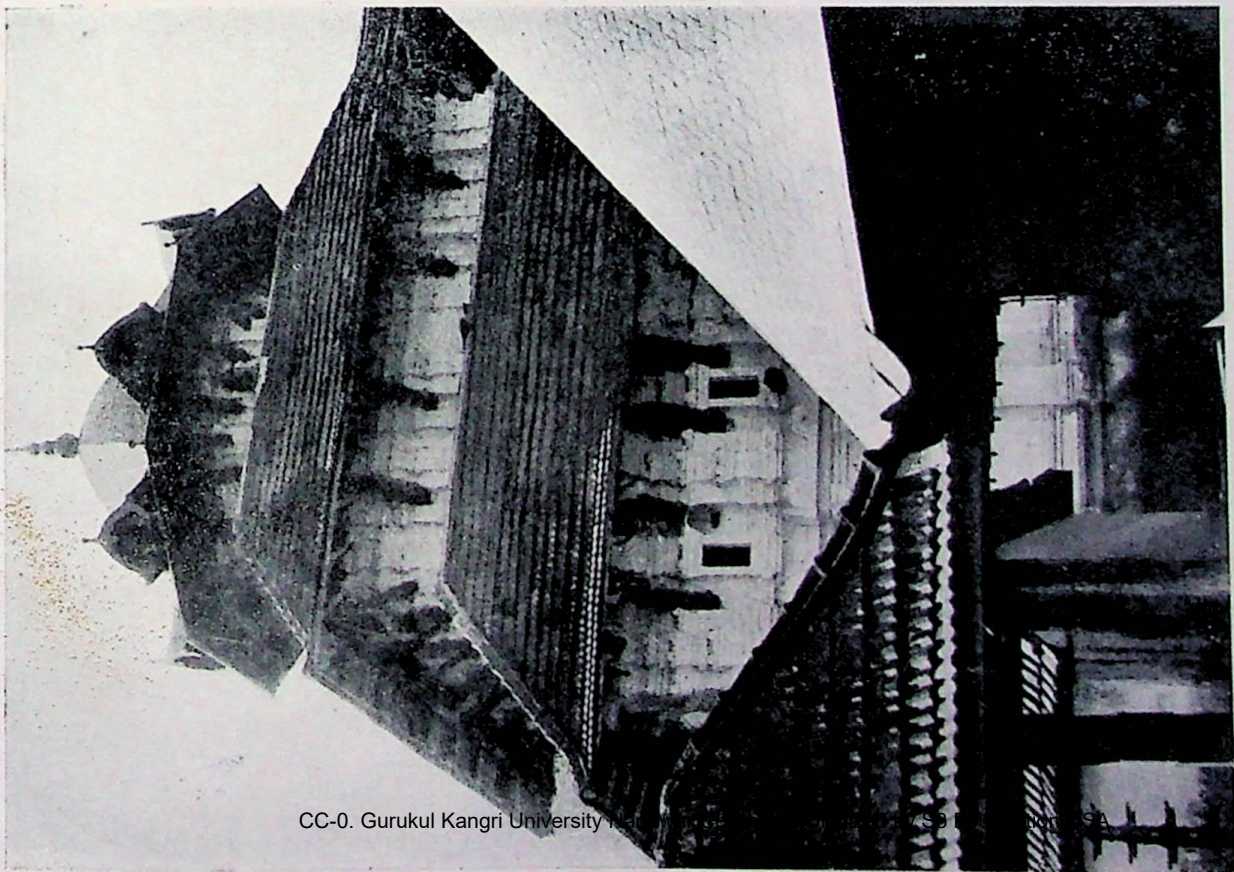



PLATE 93—Śiva temple at Peruvanam, Trichur, Trichur District.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

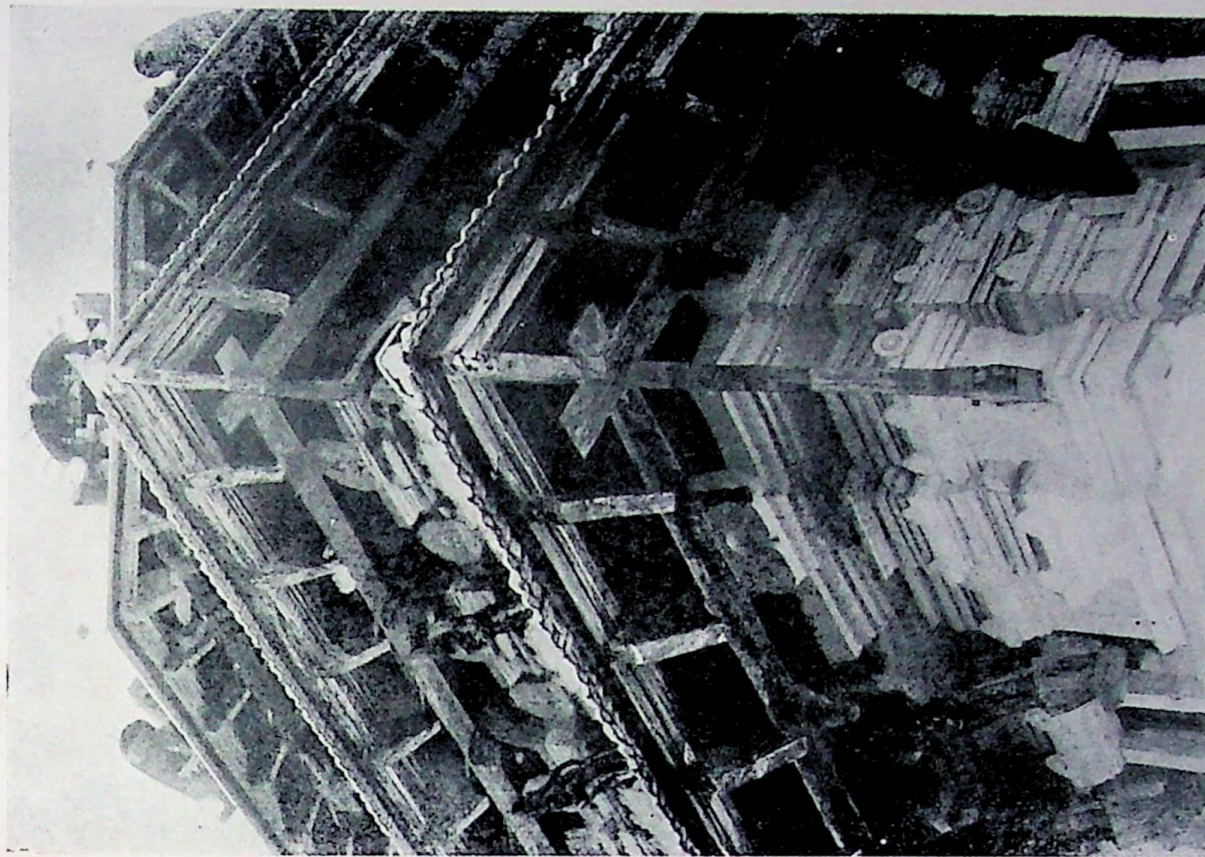



PLATE 94—Under-structure of the Śiva temple at Peruvanam, Trichur.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

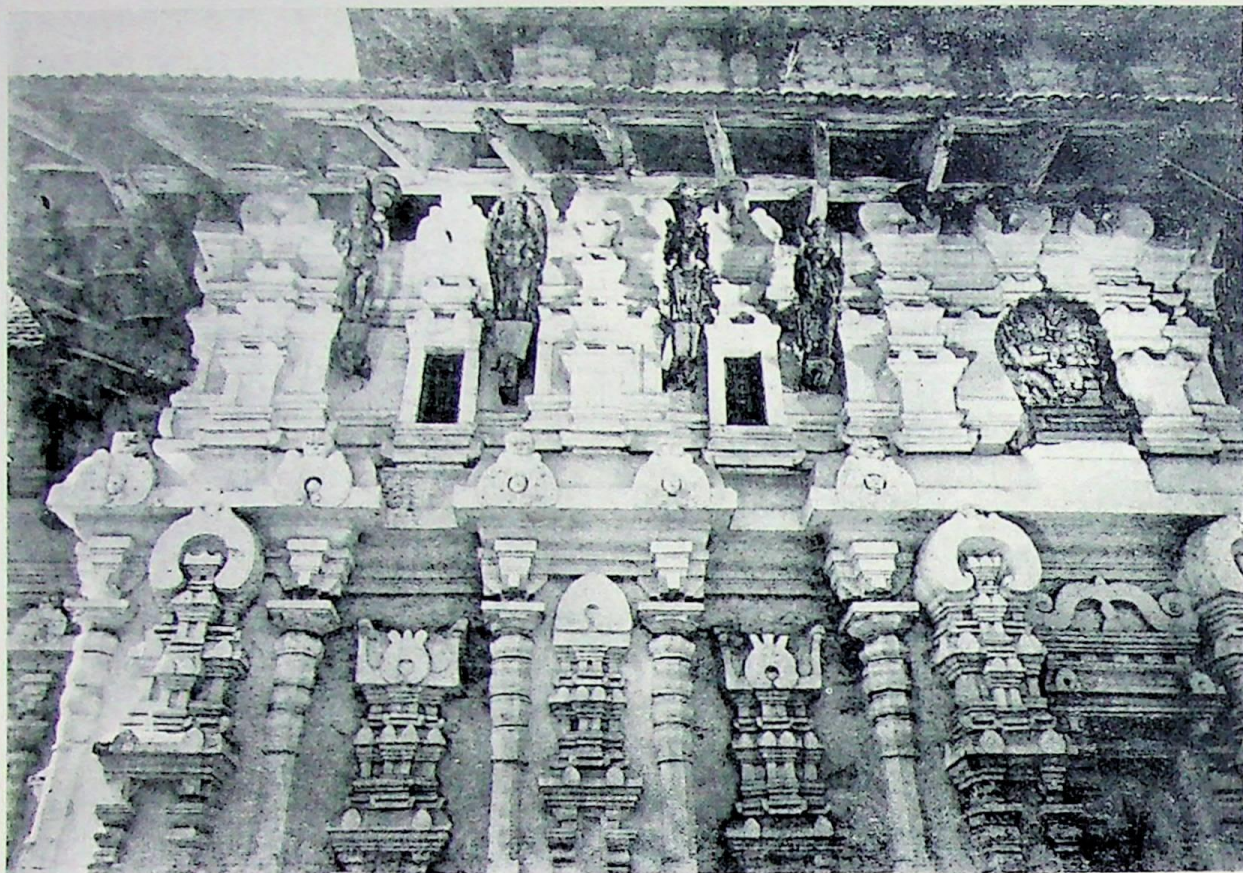



PLATE 95—Western half of the southern wall, Peruvanam Śiva temple, Trichur.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

PLATE 96—Flamboyant bracket carving of Trichur.
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

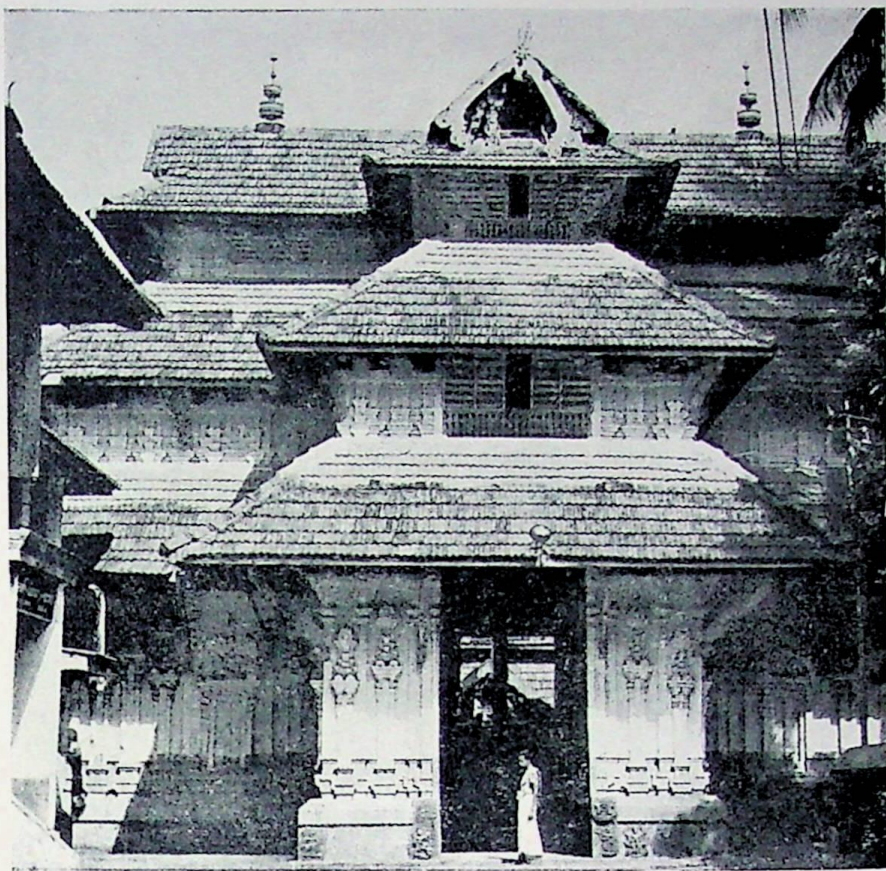



PLATE 97—Eastern *gopura* of Thiruvanchikulam Śiva temple, Cranganore, Trichur District. (*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

PLATE 98—*Srikovil* of Thiruvanchikulam. (*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

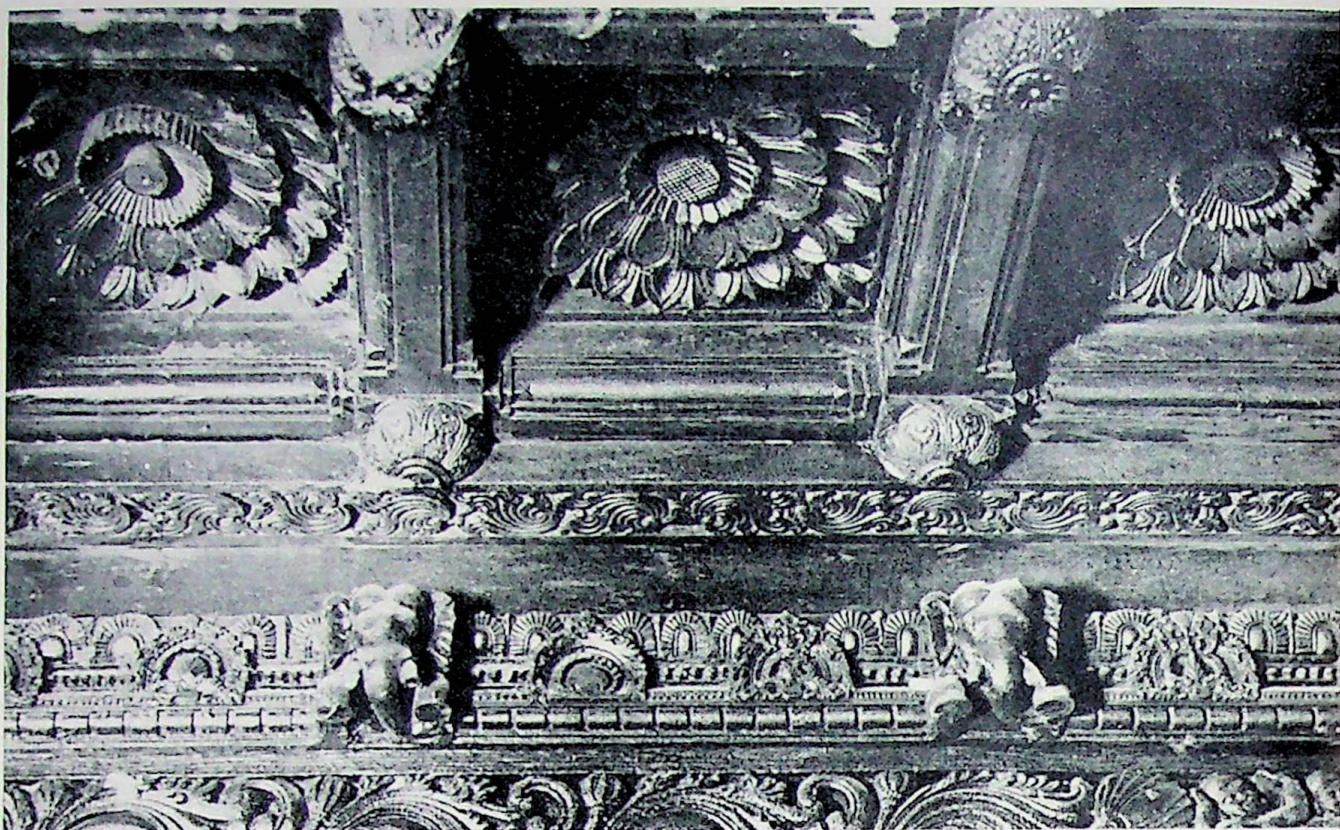



PLATE 99—Ceiling detail of the *balikkal maṇḍapa*, Thiruvanchikulam.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

PLATE 100—Three of the *saptamatṛ* figures in a subsidiary shrine to the south of the main temple at Thiruvanchikulam.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

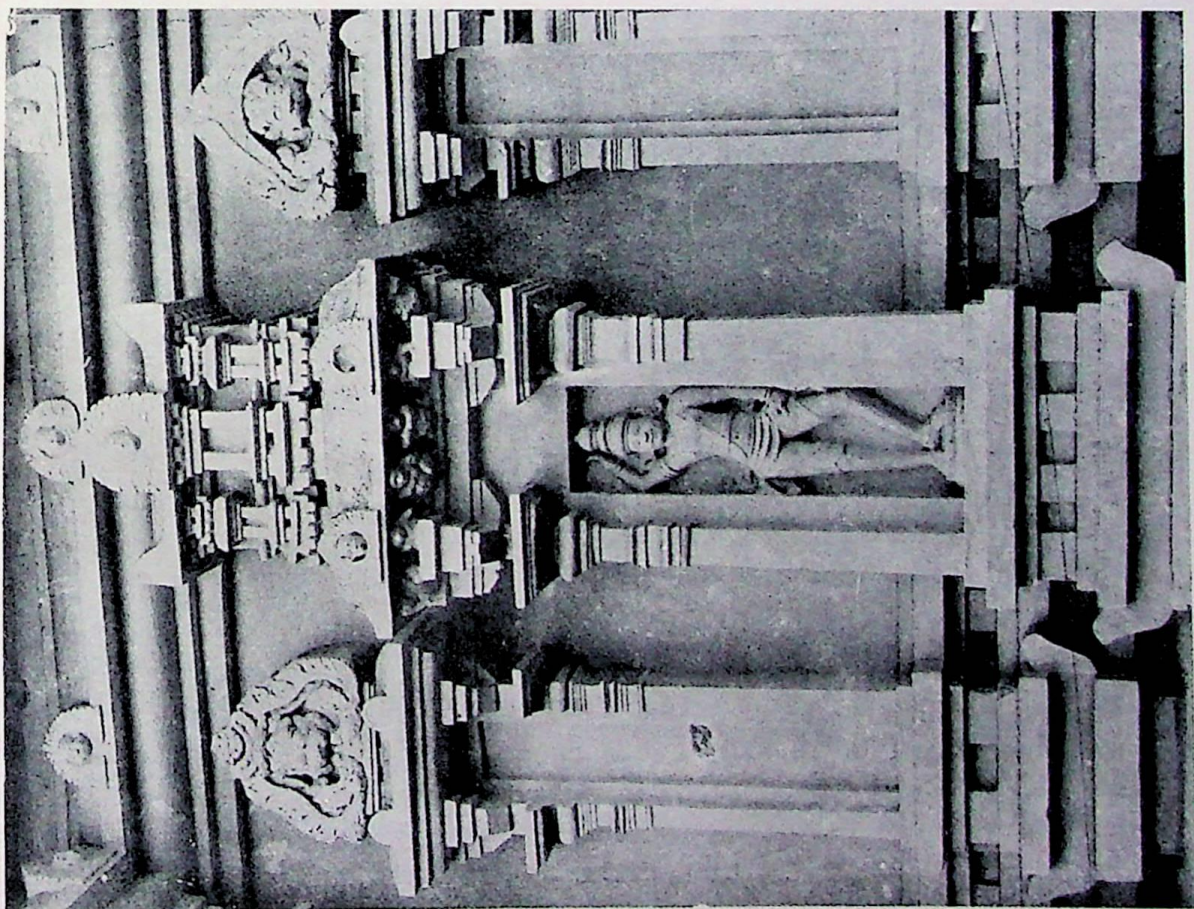



PLATE 101—Wall detail of the *srikovil* of the Viṣṇu temple at Tirukkulaśekharapuram, Trichur District.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

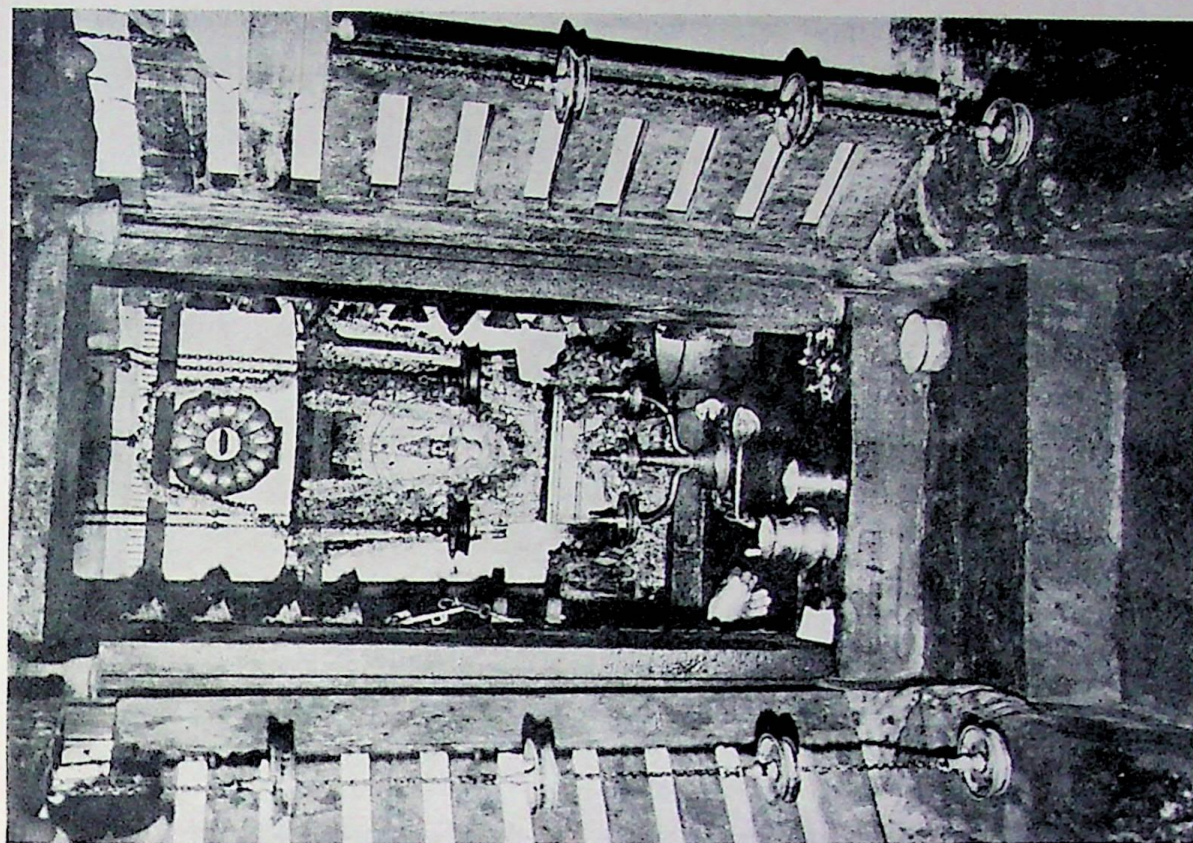



PLATE 102—Interior of the *garbha gṛha* at Tayanakavu Śāstā temple, Trichur District.

PLATE 103—Priest with portable image of Bhagavatī, Ariyannur temple, Trichur District.

PLATE 104—Dvārapāla and Hari-Hara bracket, Kūdalmānikkam at Irinjalakuda, Trichur District.

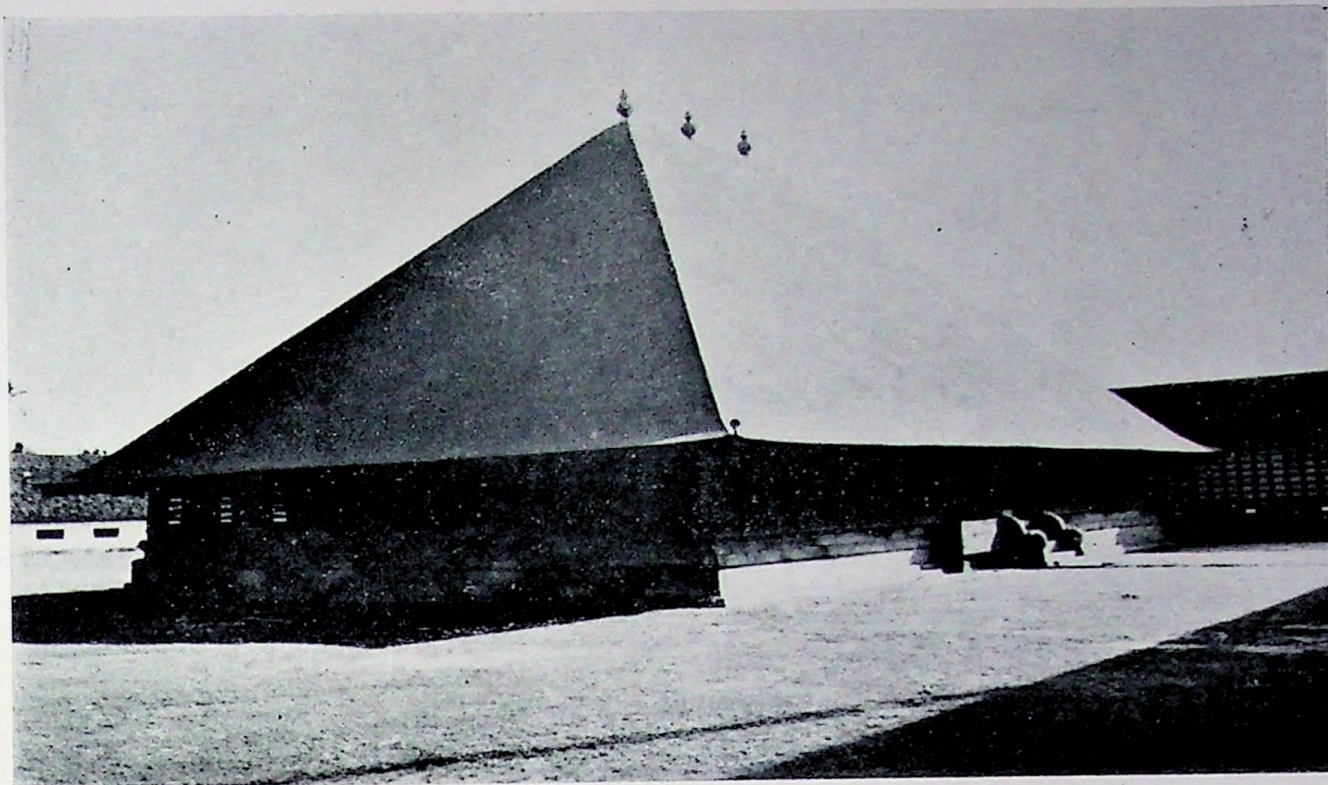



Plate 105—*Kūttambalam* of Kūḍalmānikkam temple, Irinjalakuda.

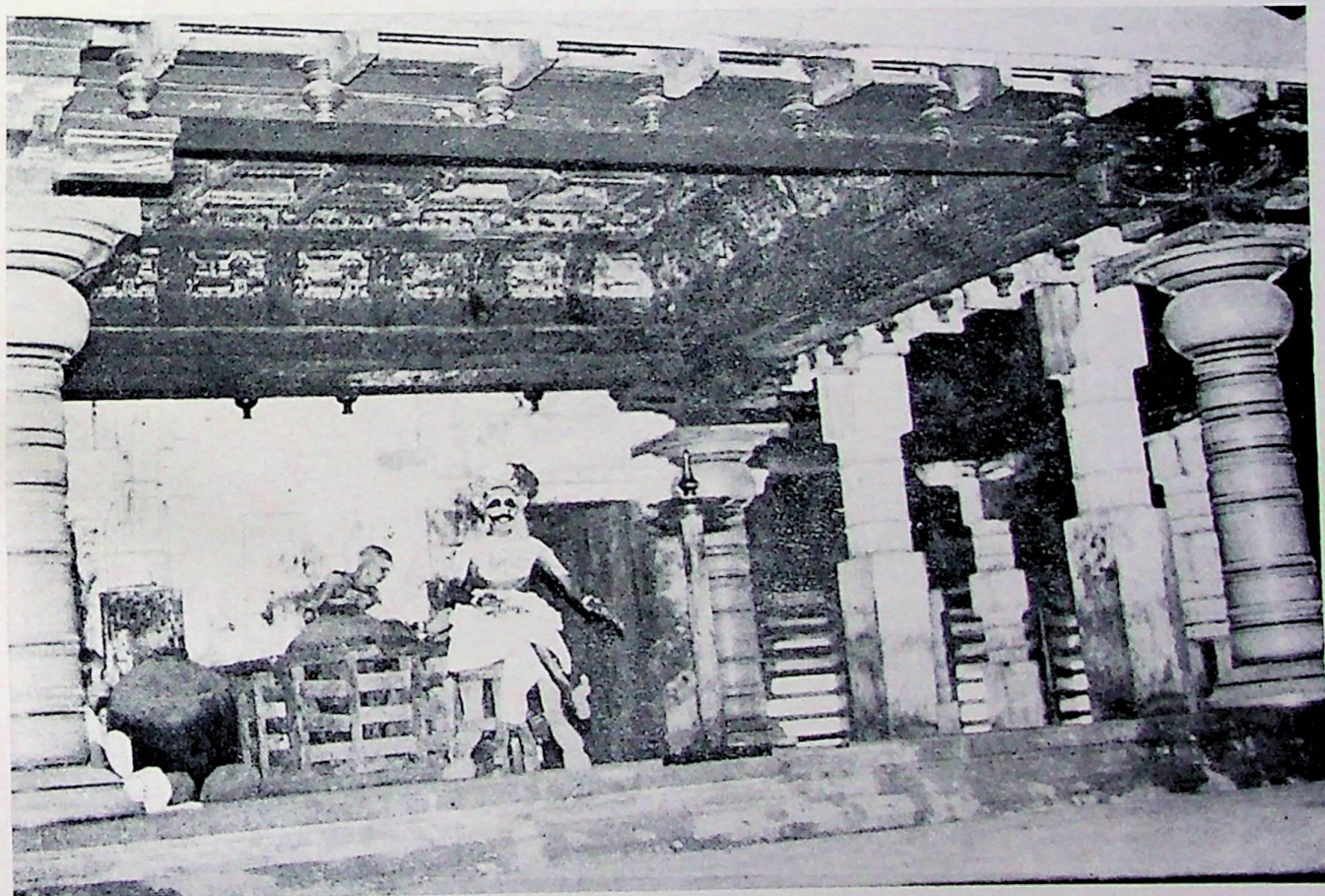



Plate 106—Stage at Irinjalakuda.

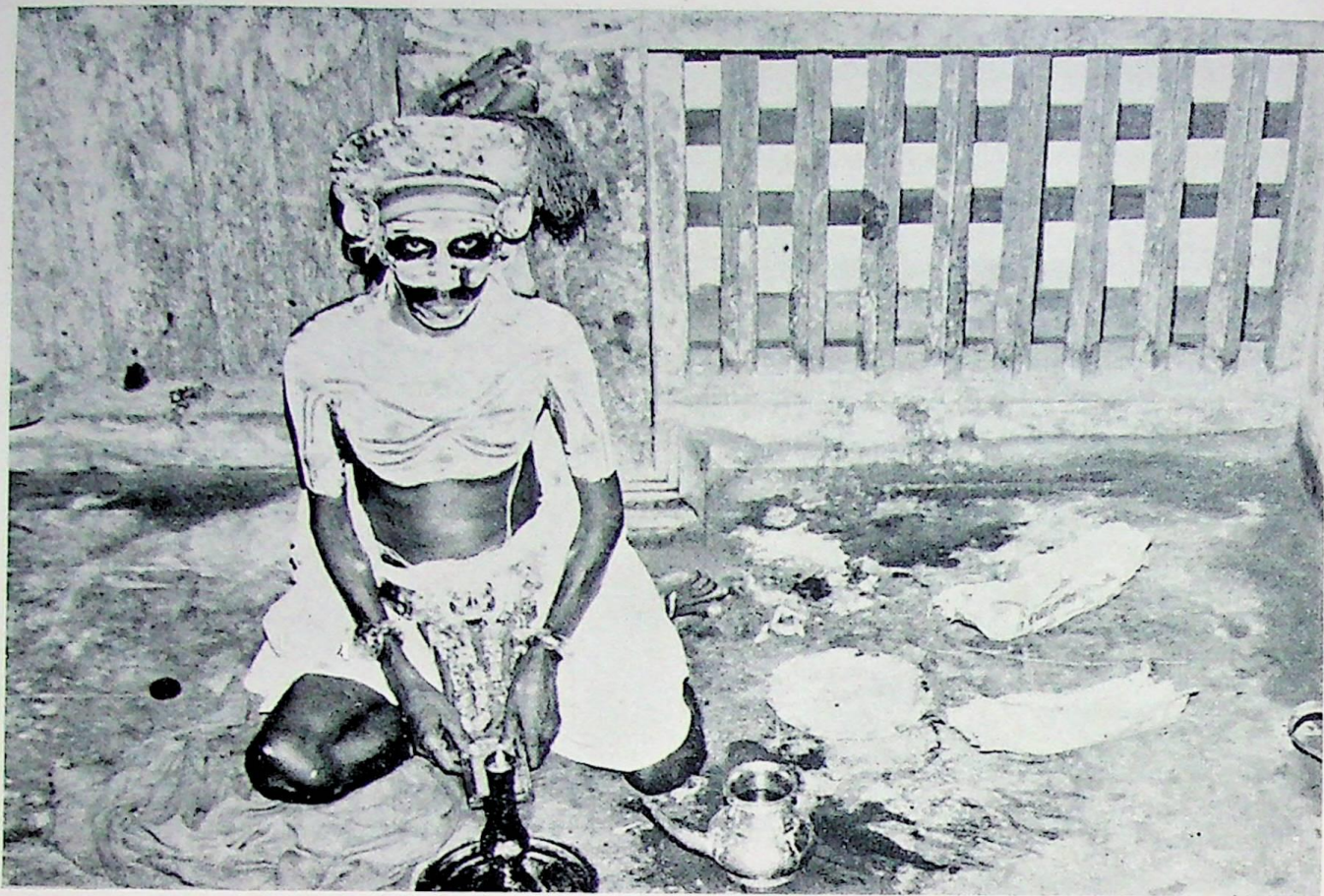



PLATE 107—*Cākyār* performer at Irinjalakuda.

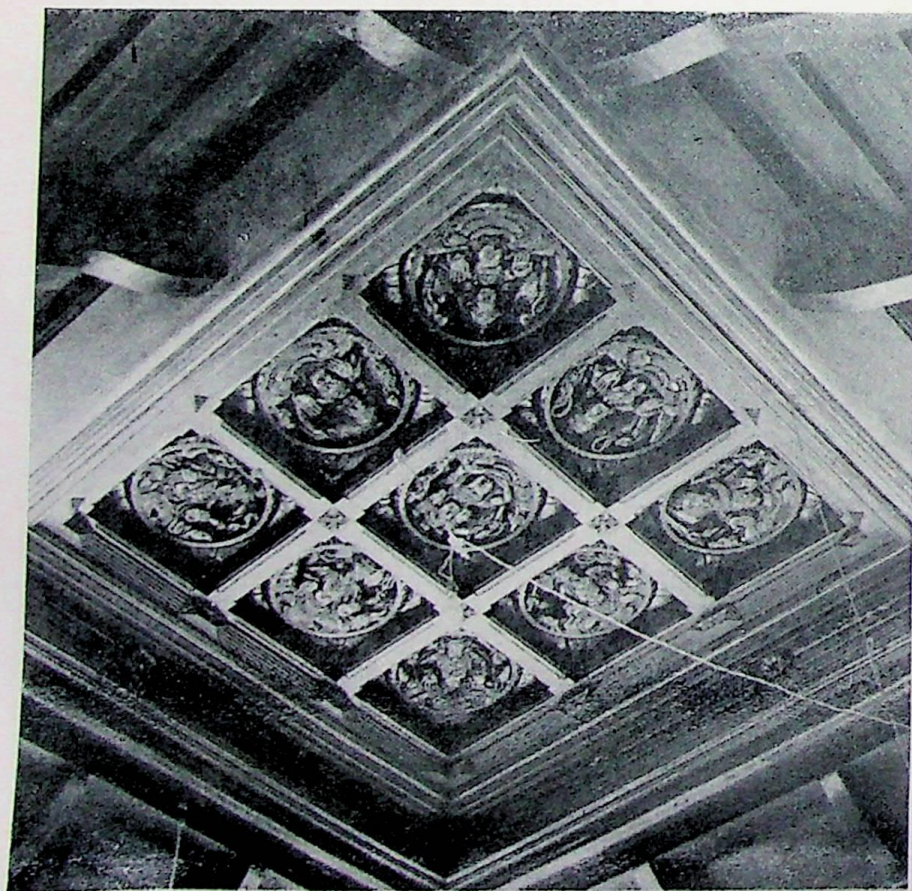



PLATE 108—Ceiling of *namaskāra māṇḍapa* at Vamanamūrti, Ernakulam District.

PLATE 109—Ceiling detail, Vamanamūrti.

PLATE 110—Outer *gopura* with huge lamps. Santānagopāla-Kṛṣṇasvāmin temple, Ernakulam District.

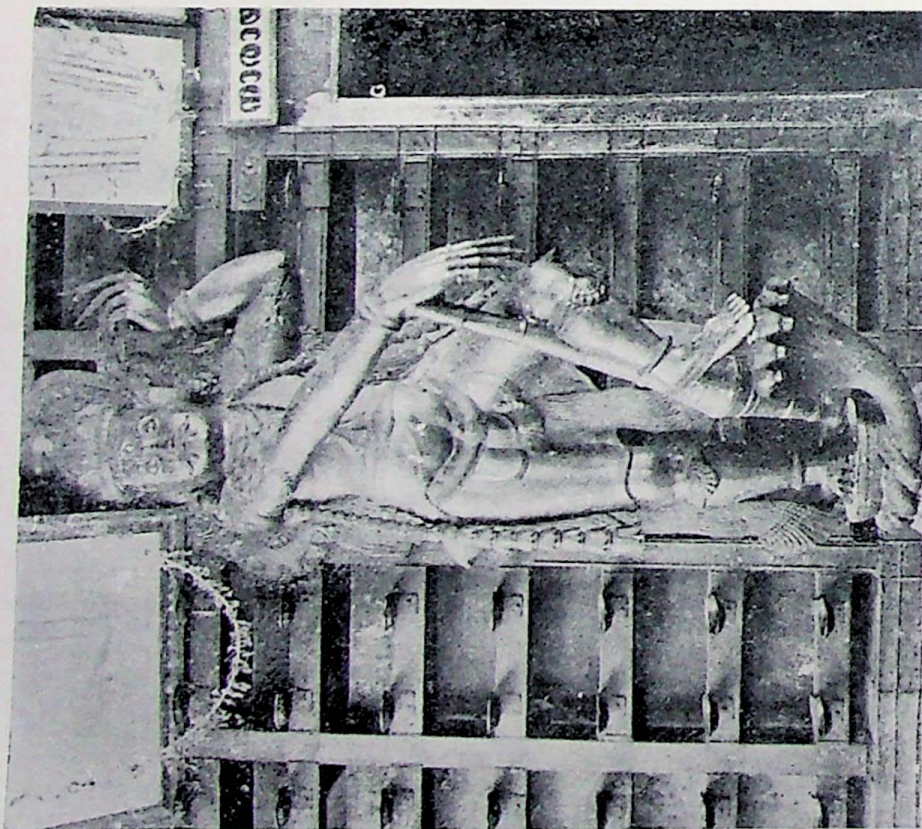



PLATE 111—Metal guardian of Santānagopāla-Kṛṣṇasvāmin.

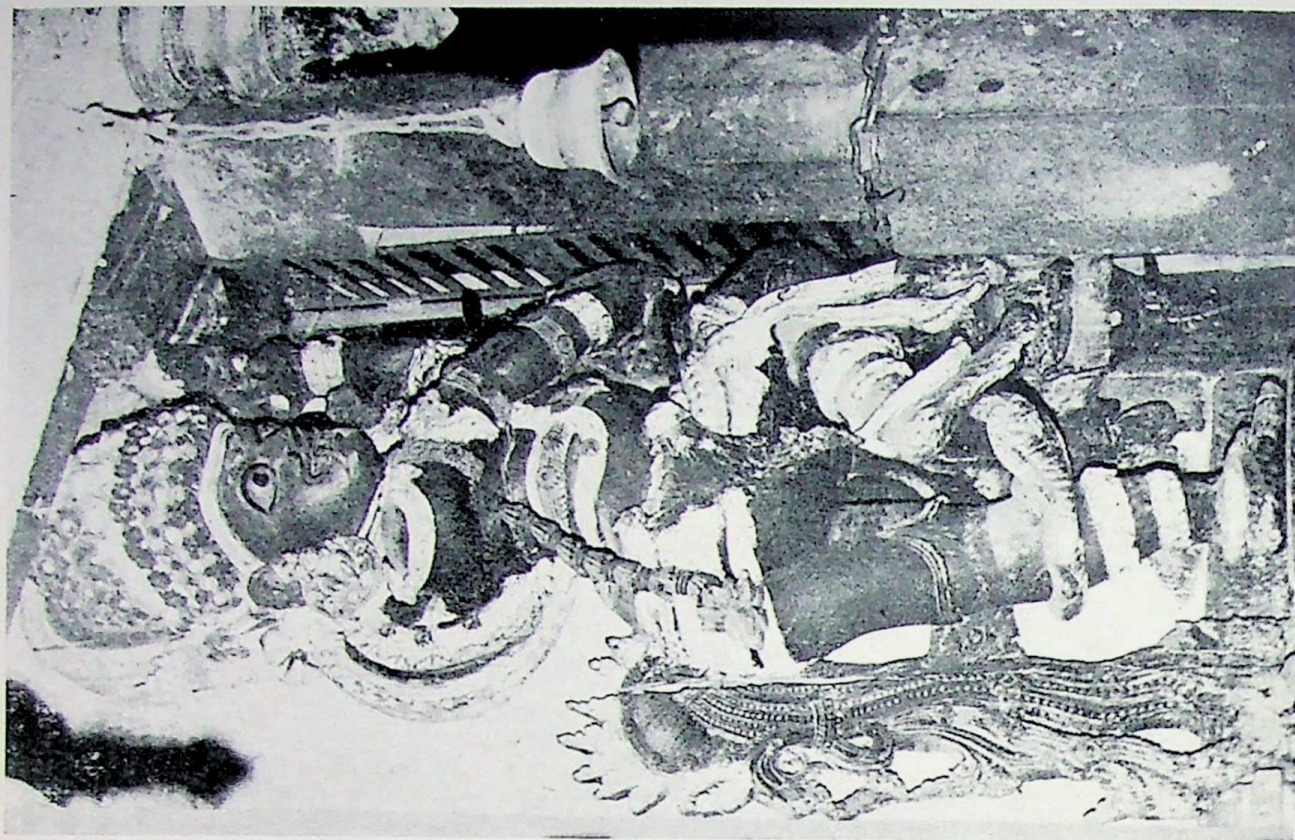



PLATE 112—Dvārapāla carved of wood at Peruntirkkoyil Śiva temple, Pazhur, Ernakulam District.

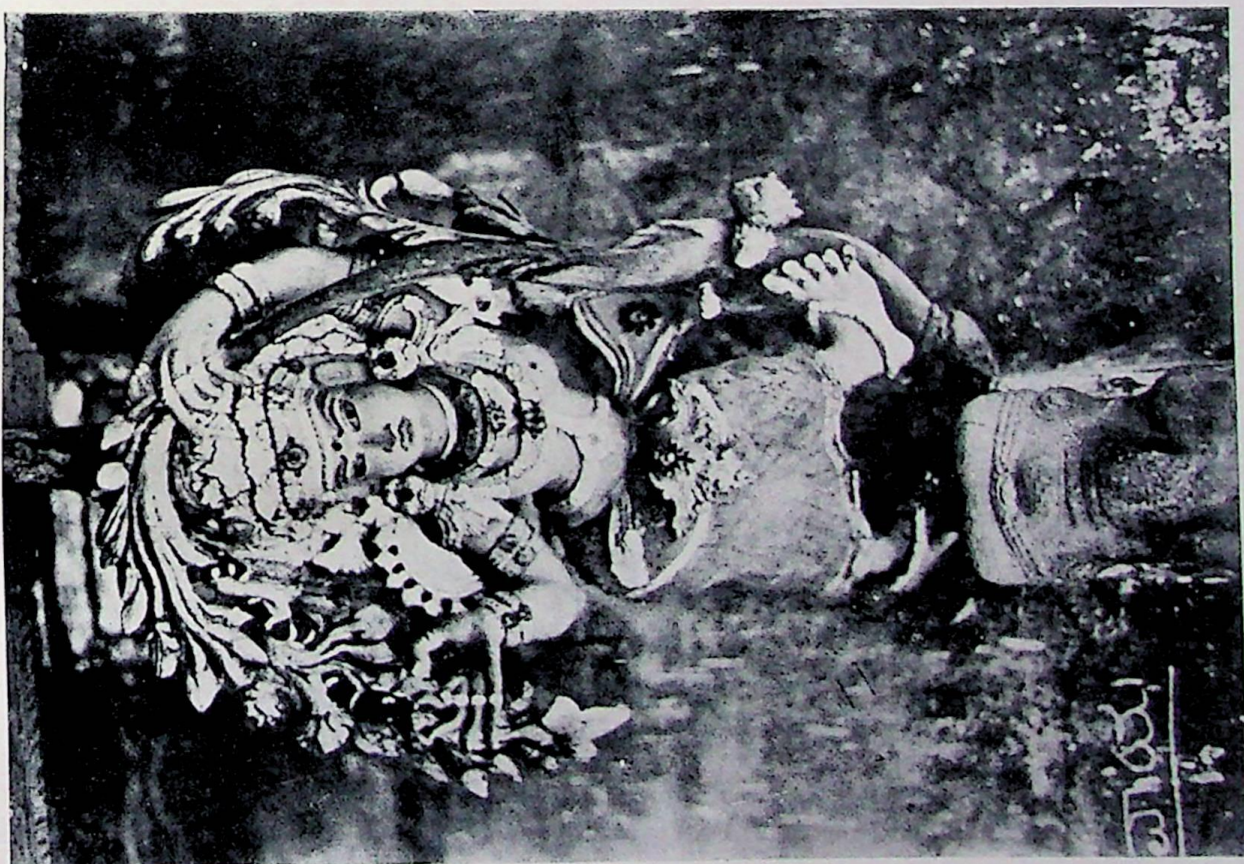



PLATE 113—Female bracket figure of Peruntirkkoyil Śiva temple.

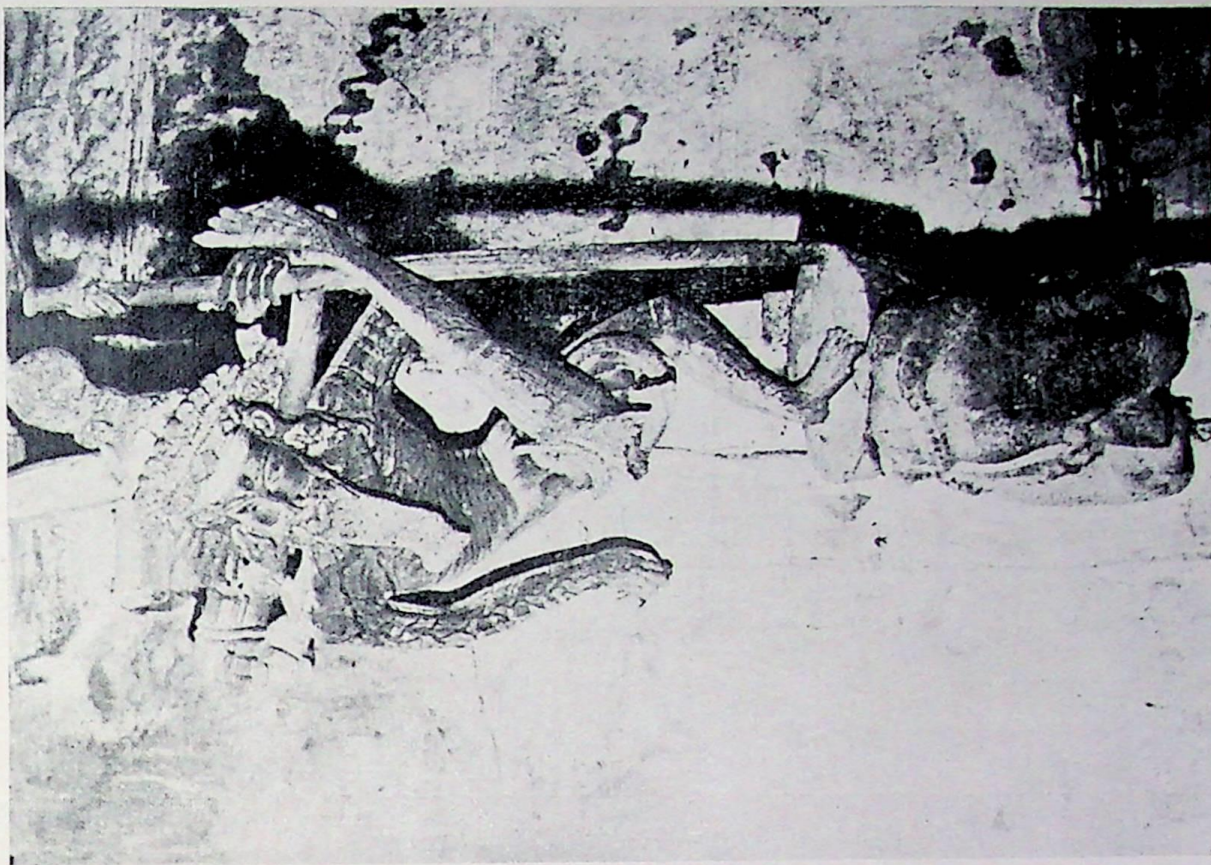



PLATE 114—*Rishi* bracket figure of Peruntikkoyil Śiva temple.

PLATE 115—Painted panel at Peruntirkkoyil temple.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

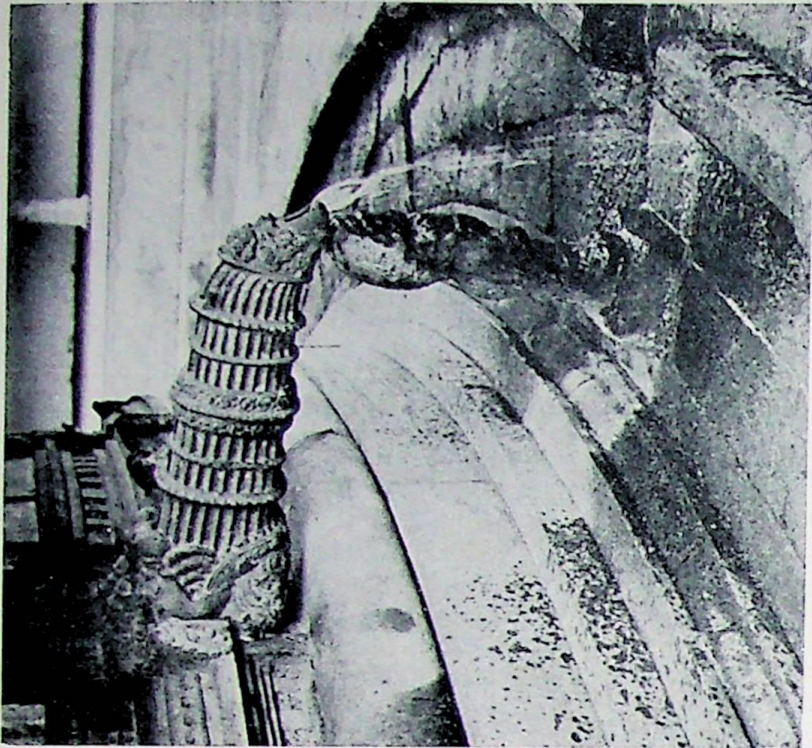



PLATE 116—Peruntirkkoyil Śiva *praṇāla*.

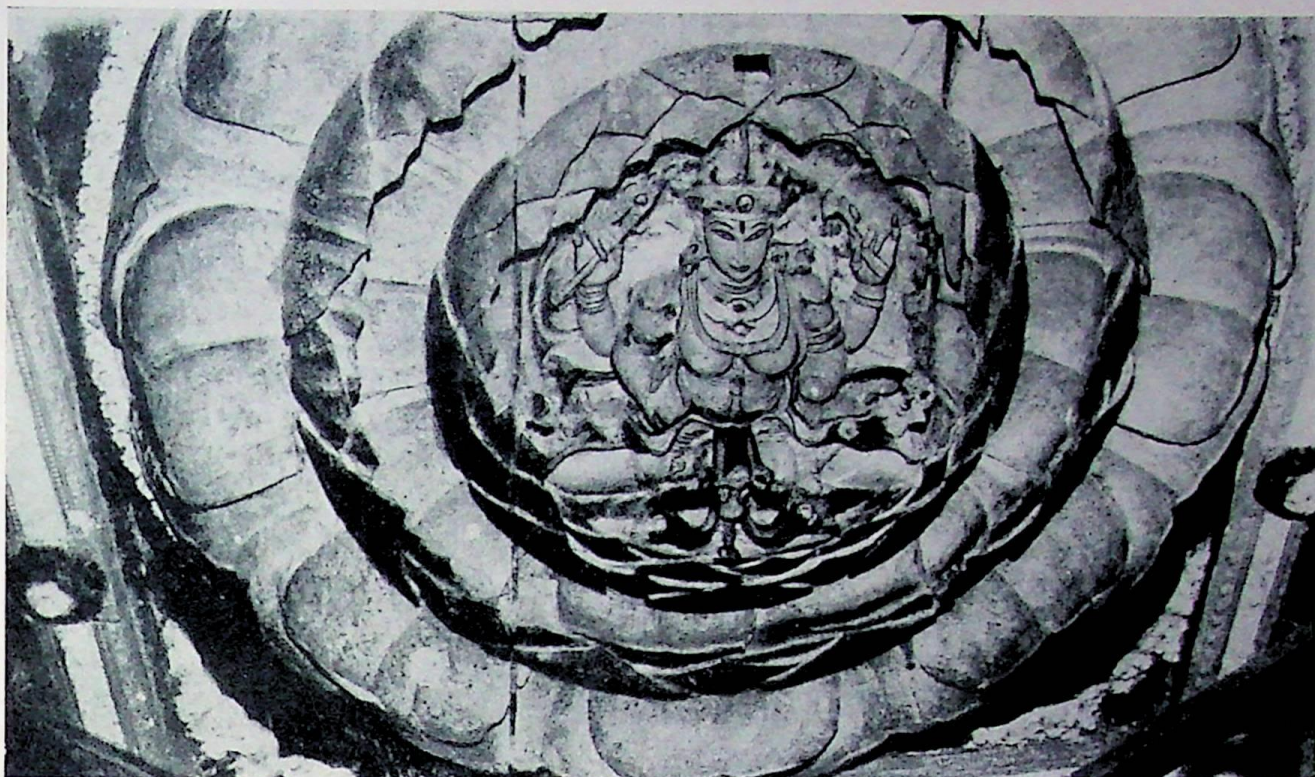



PLATE 117—Ceiling image in the *balikkal maṇḍapa* of Peruntirkkoyil Śiva.

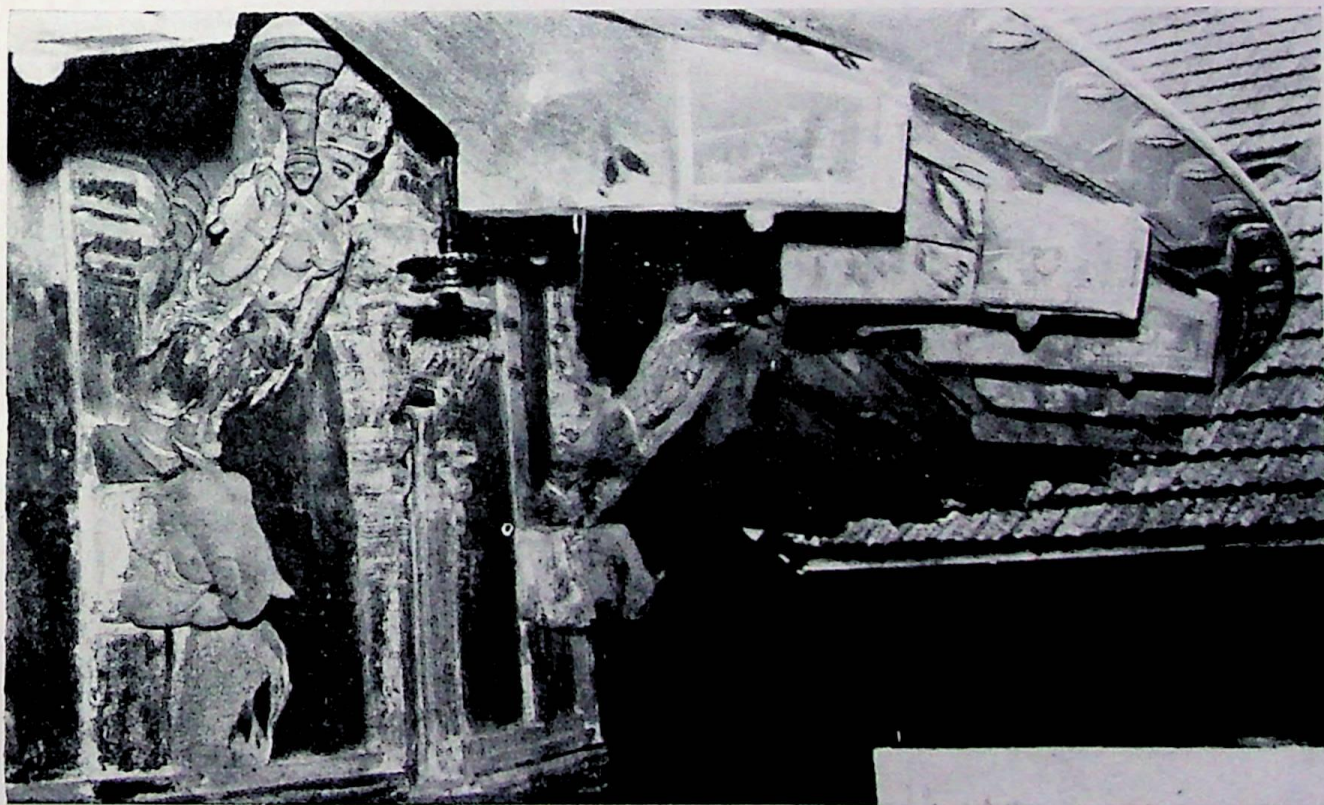



PLATE 118—*Srikovil* wall and roof structure of Peruntirkkoyil Śiva.

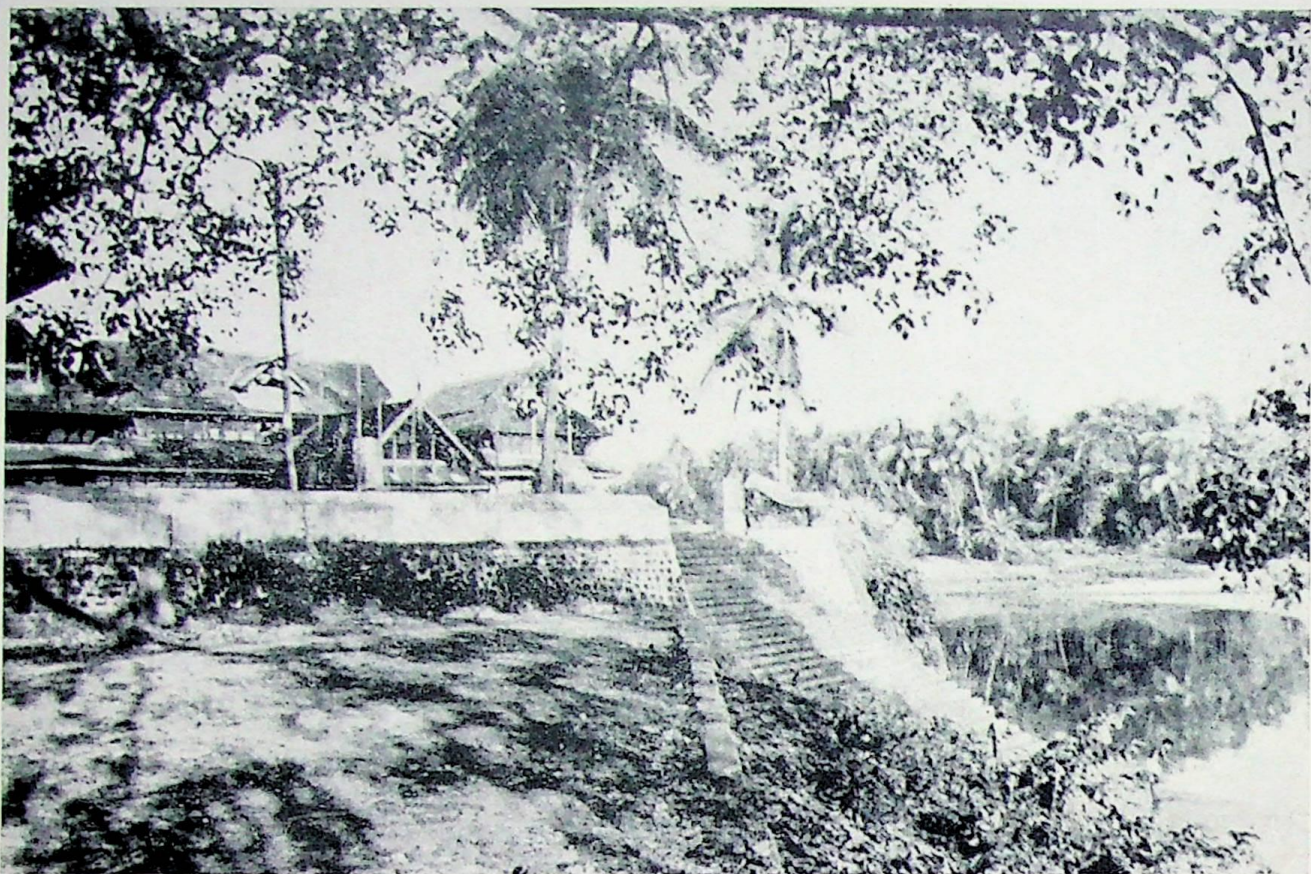



Plate 119—Srī Durgā temple at Cheranallur, Ernakulam District.

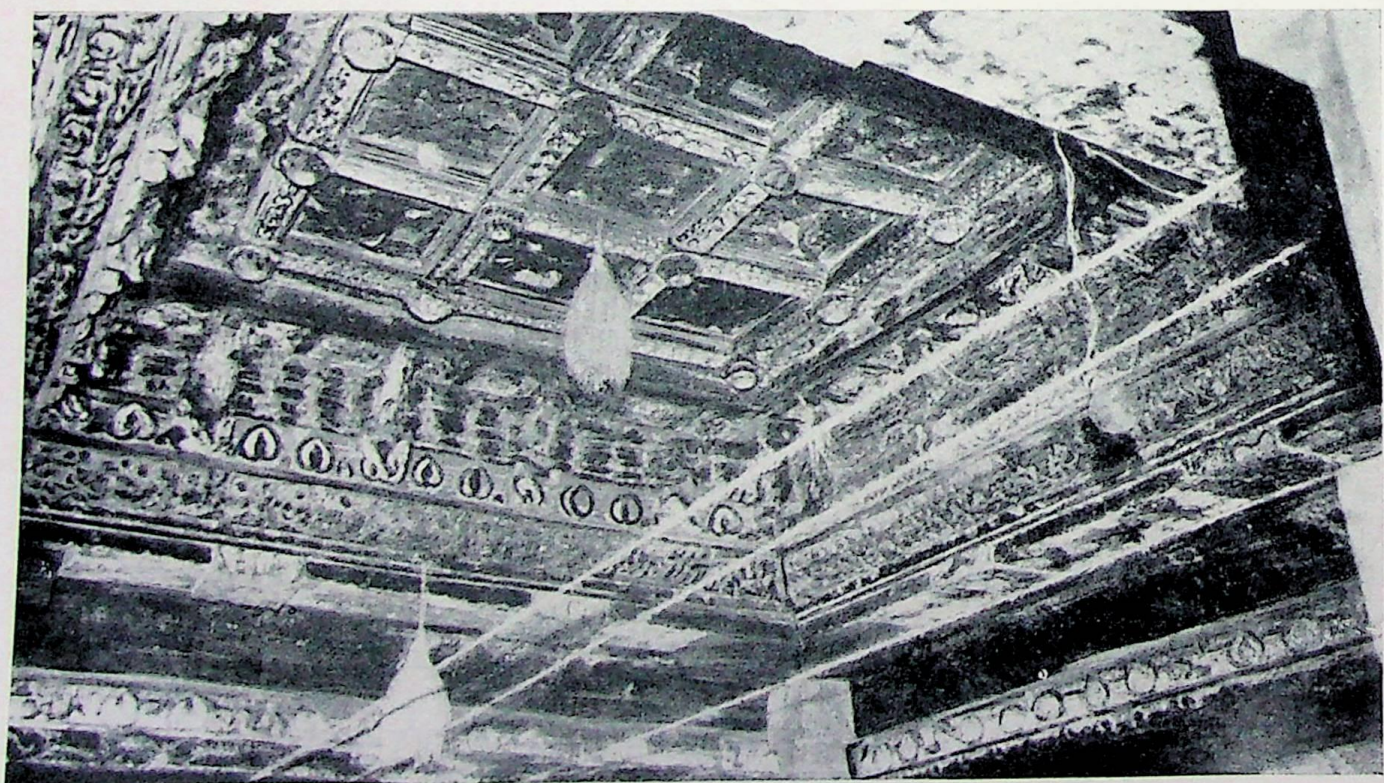



Plate 120—*Maṇḍapa* ceiling, Śrī Durgā temple, Cheranallur.

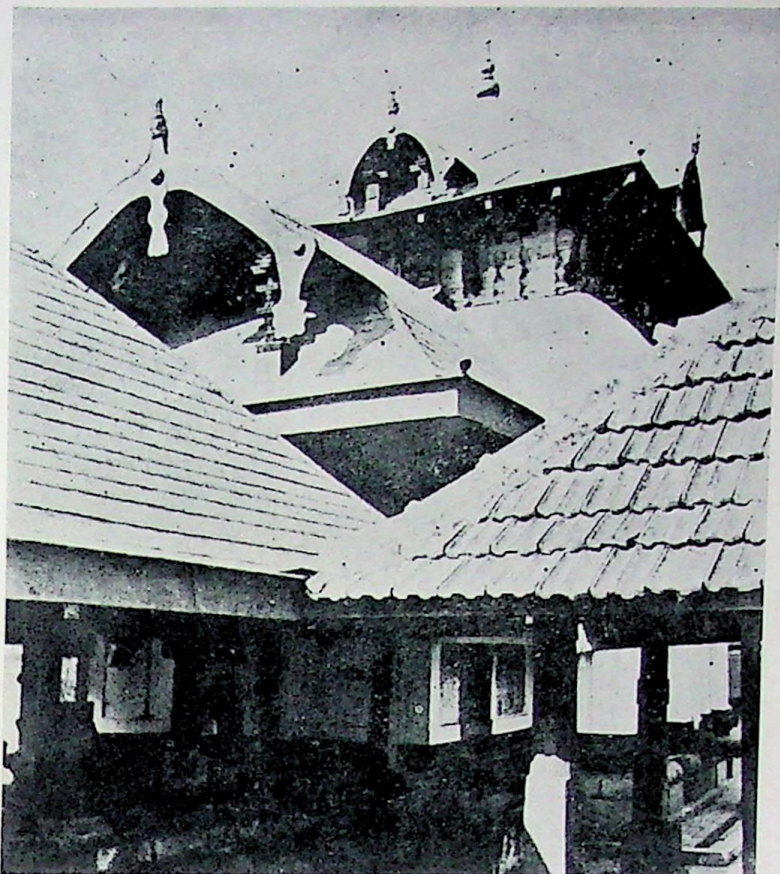



PLATE 121—Structures of Śrī Durgā.

PLATE 122—Metal deities at the base of the Śrī Durgā flagstaff.

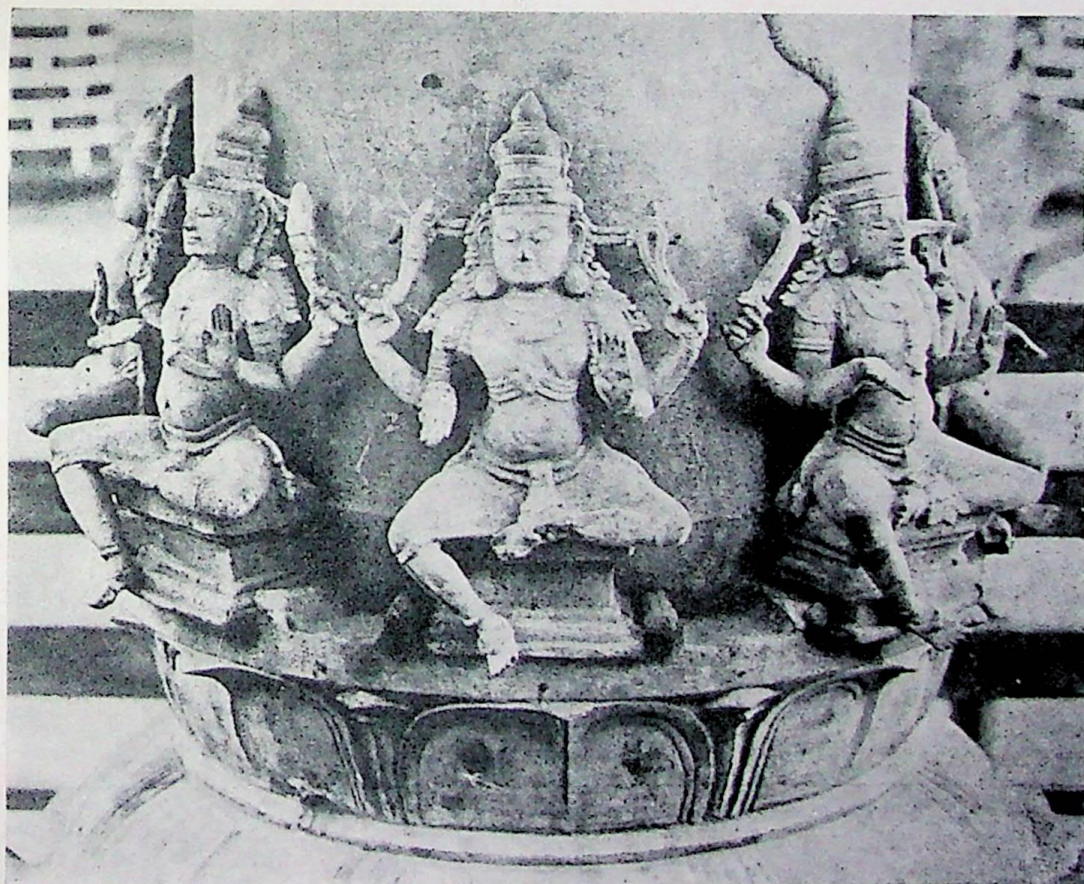
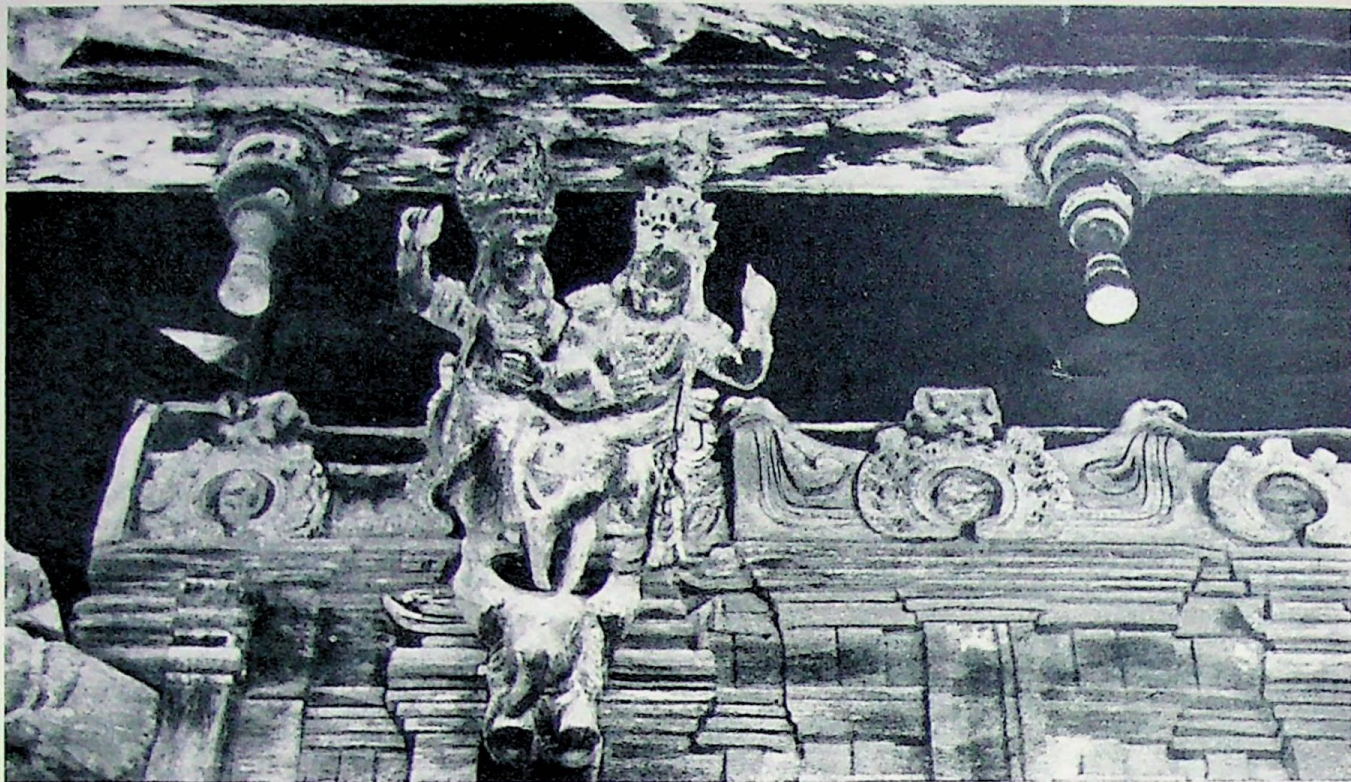



PLATE 123—Bracket figures of Śri Durgā temple.

PLATE 124—Mural Fragment of Śrī Durgā temple.

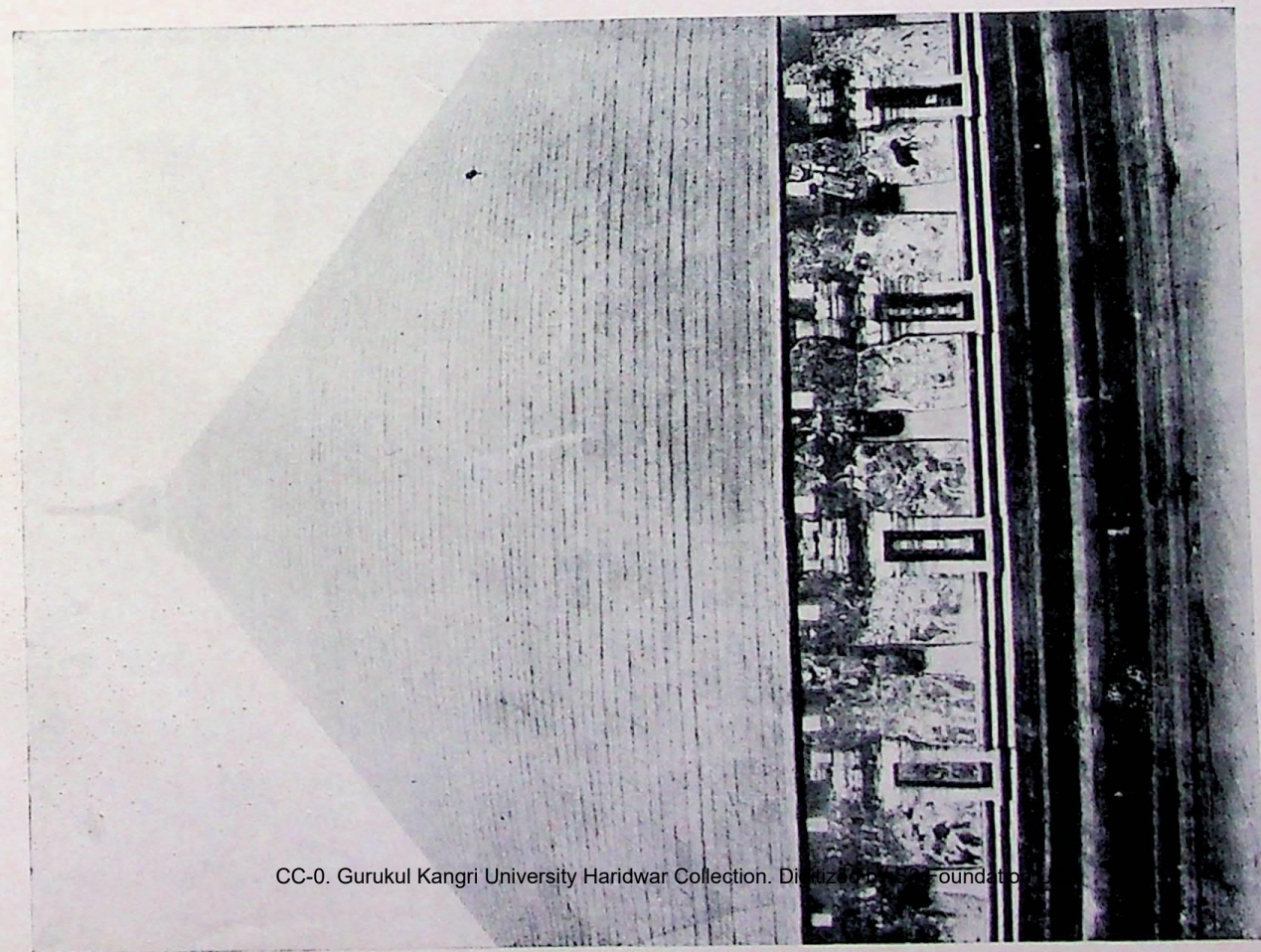



PLATE 125—Vaikom Śiva temple *srikovil*, Kottayam District.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

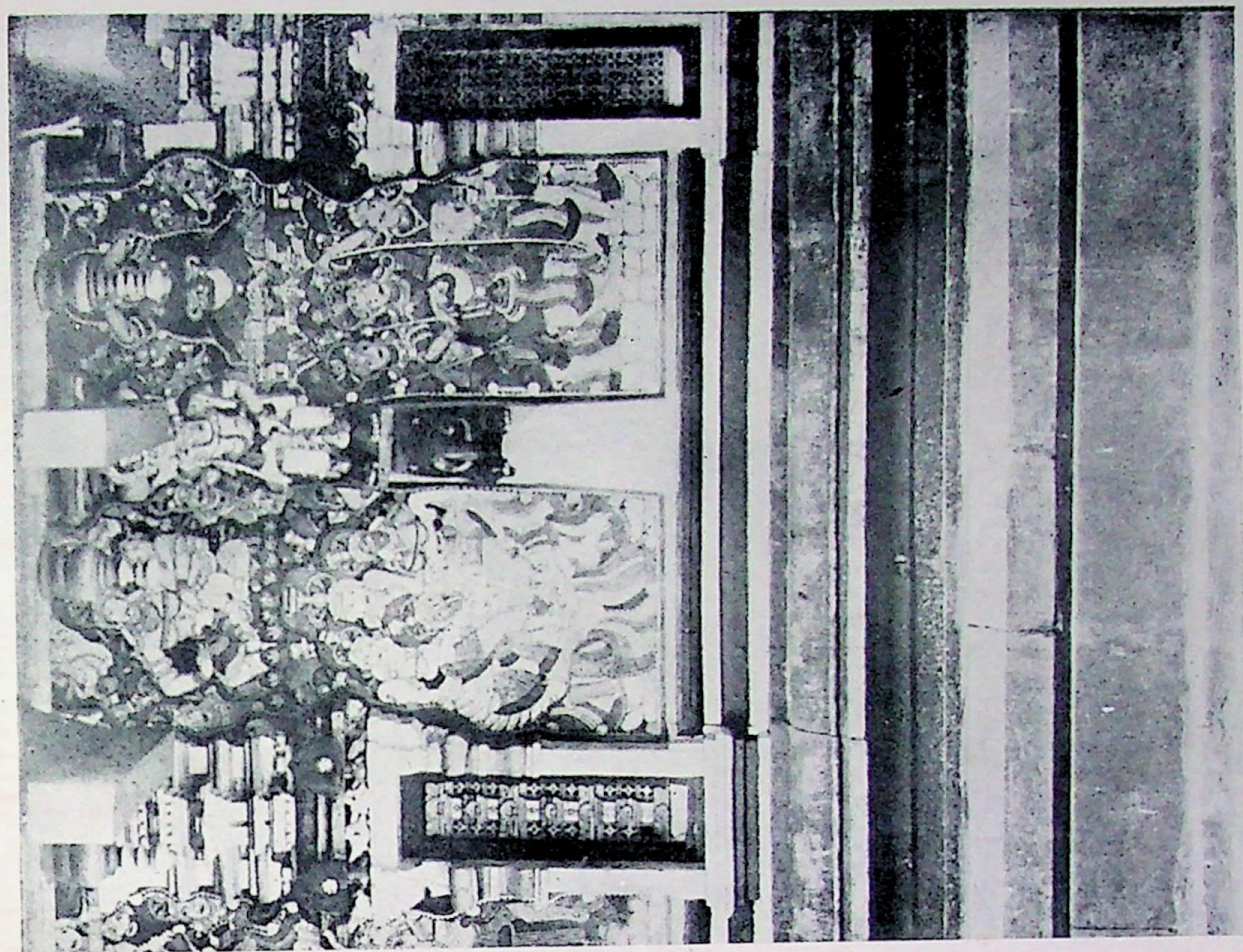



PLATE 126—Wall paintings at Vaikom.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

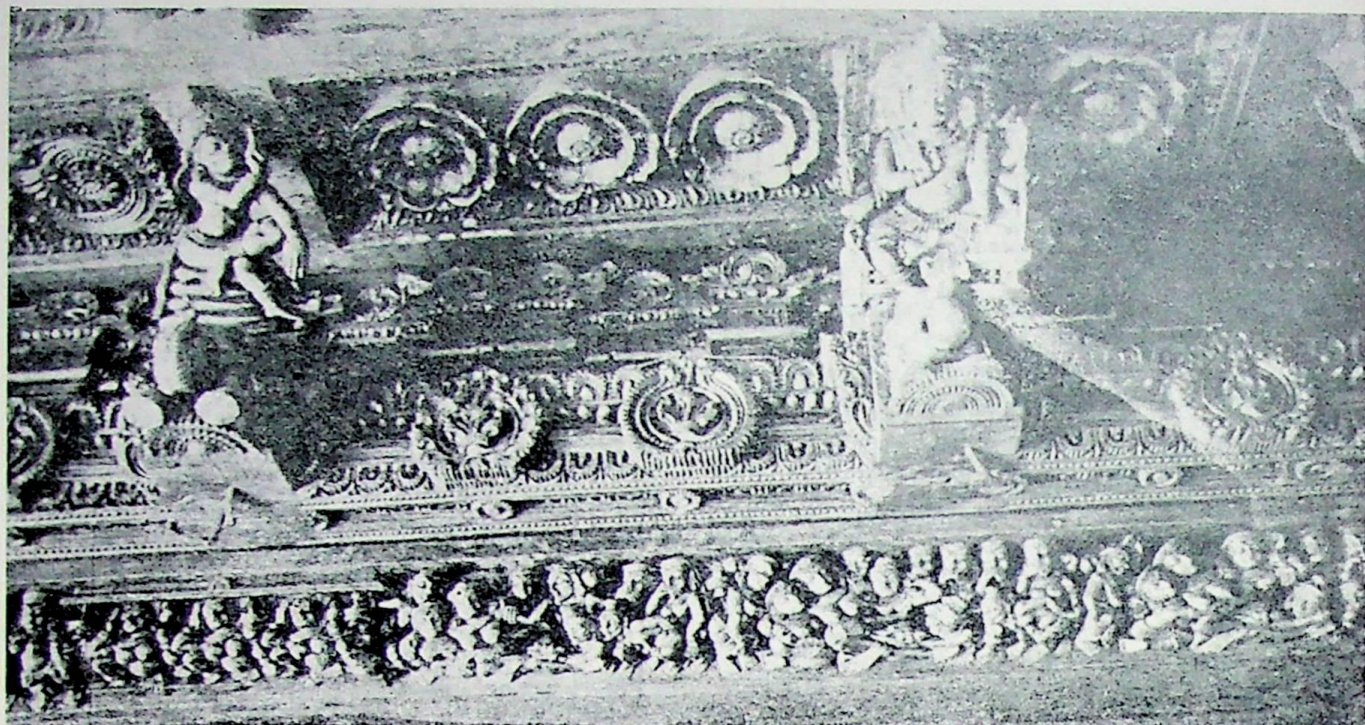



PLATE 127—Ceiling detail, Vazhapalli Śiva temple, Kottayam District.

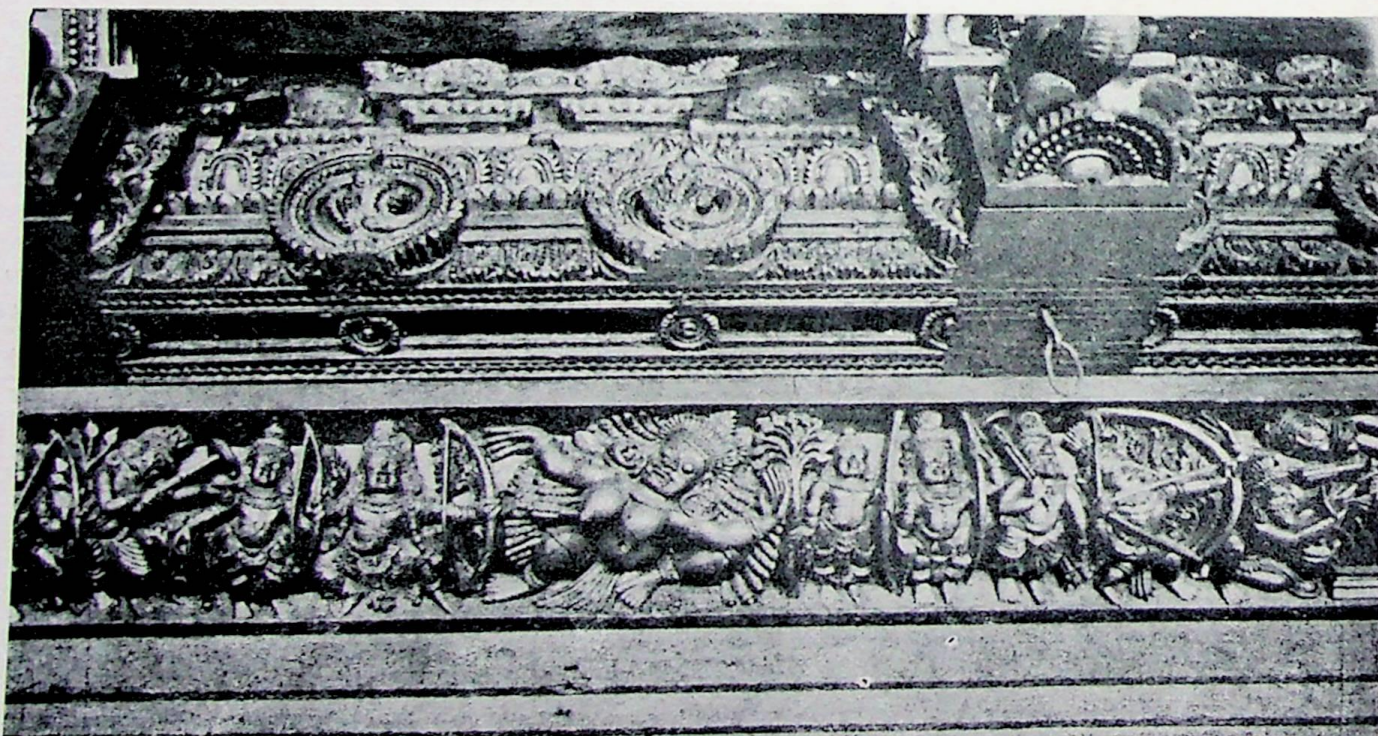



PLATE 128—Cornice detail at Vazhapalli Śiva temple.

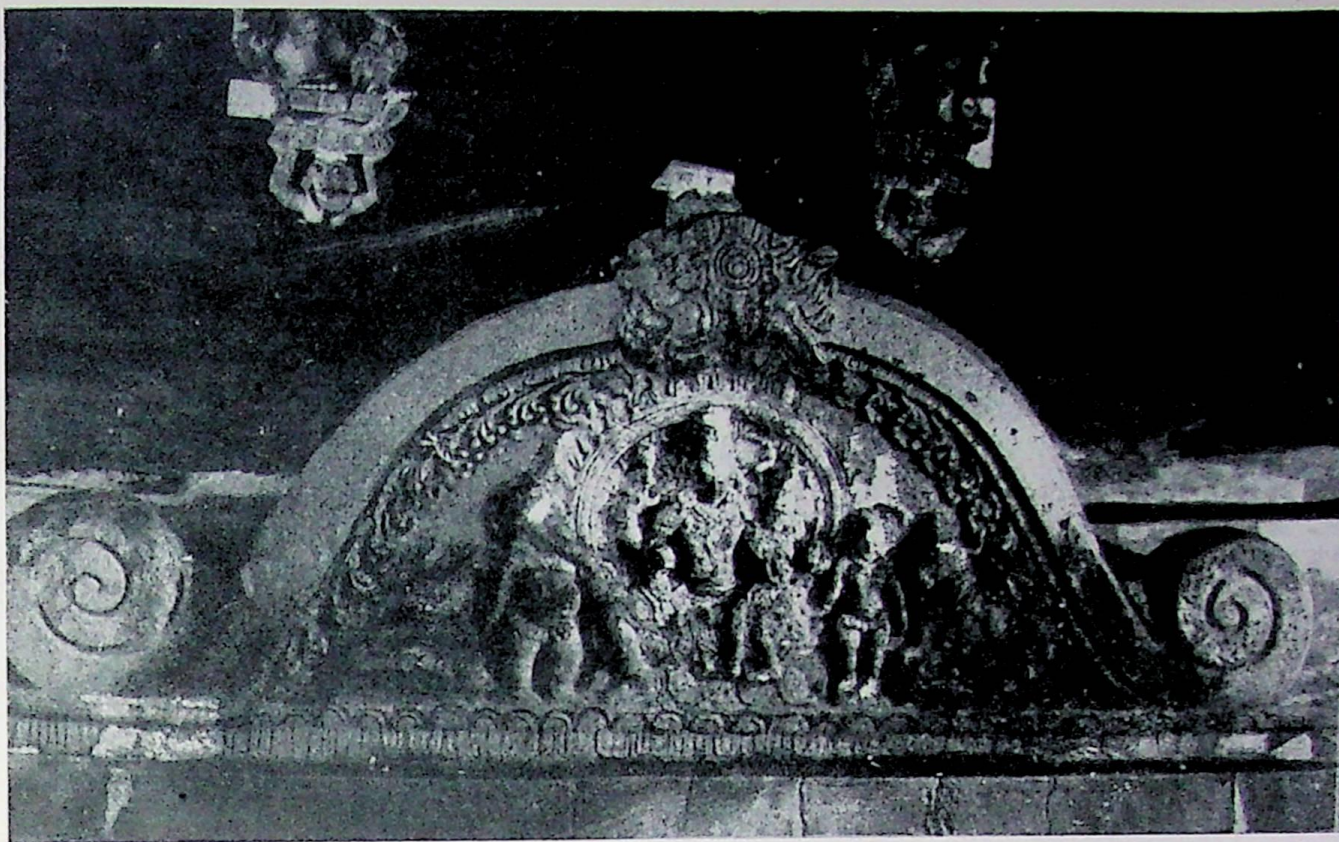



PLATE 129—Śiva and Pārvatī balustrade of Vazhapalli temple in Kottayam District.
(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

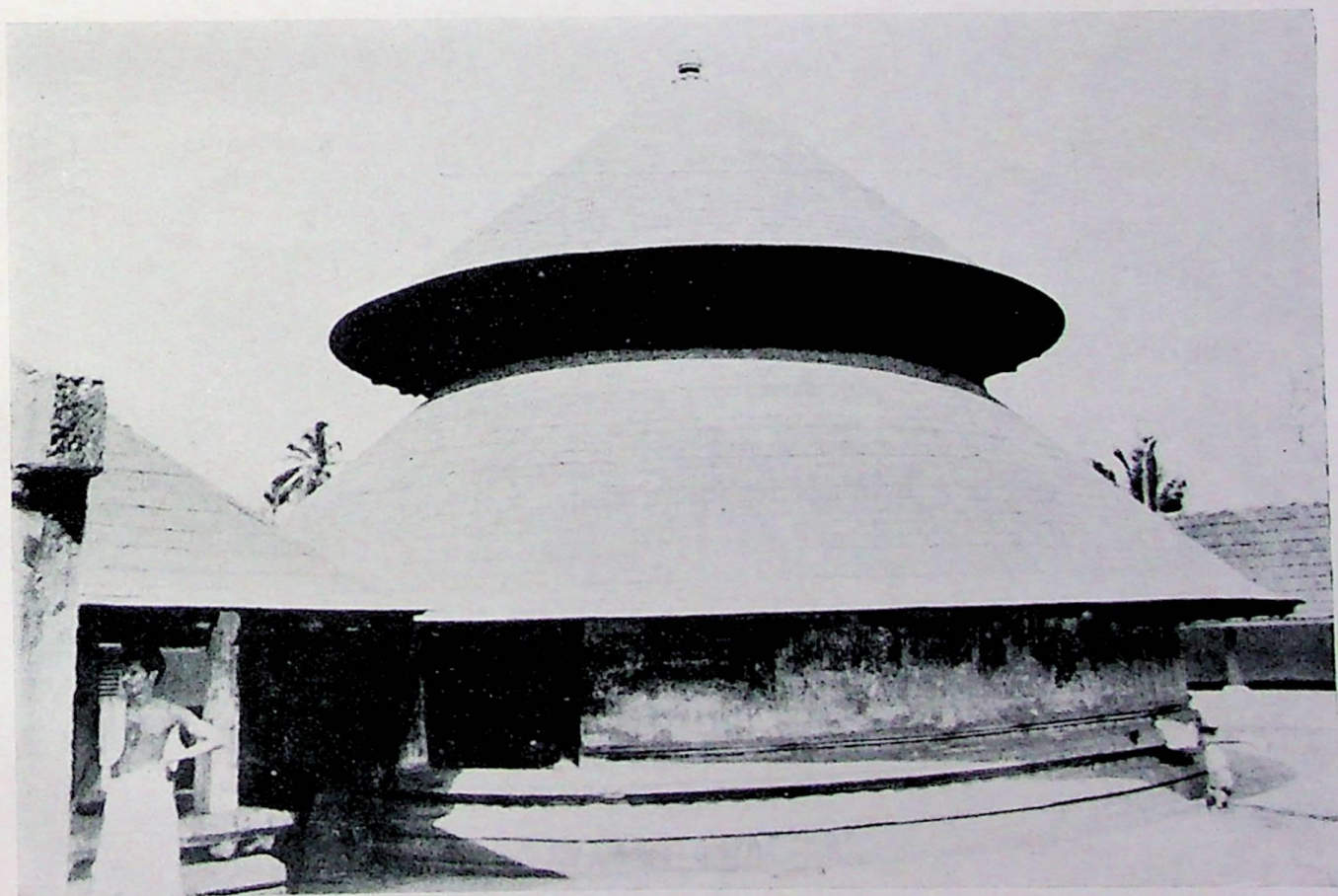



PLATE 130—The temple of **Viṣṇu** at Tirukkodithnam, Kottayam District.

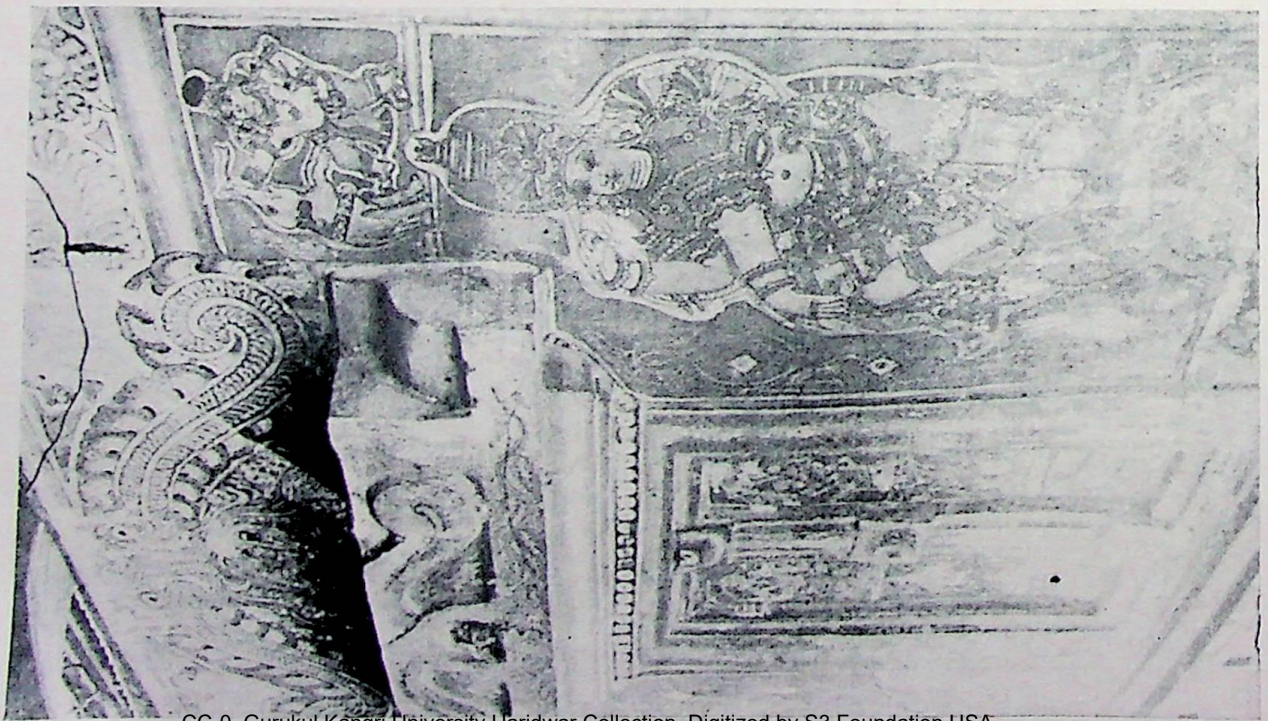



PLATE 131—Murals and false door at Thirukkodithnam.

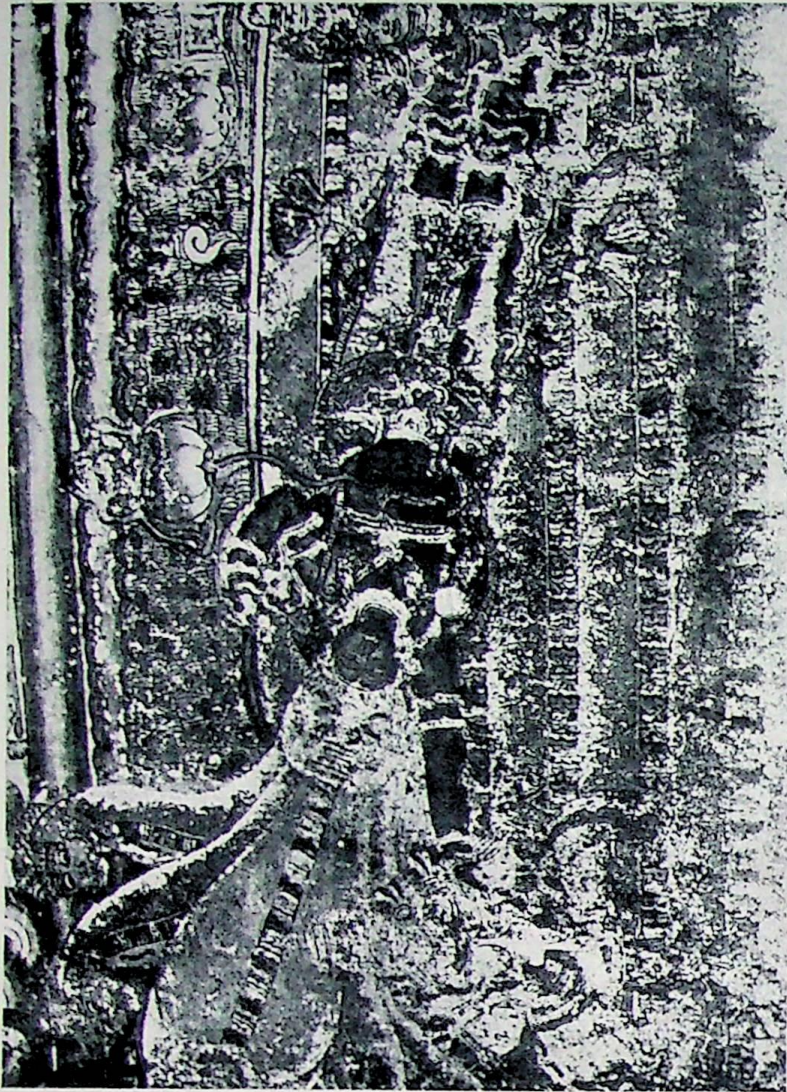



PLATE 132—Viṣṇu Anantaśayin at Thirukkodithnam.

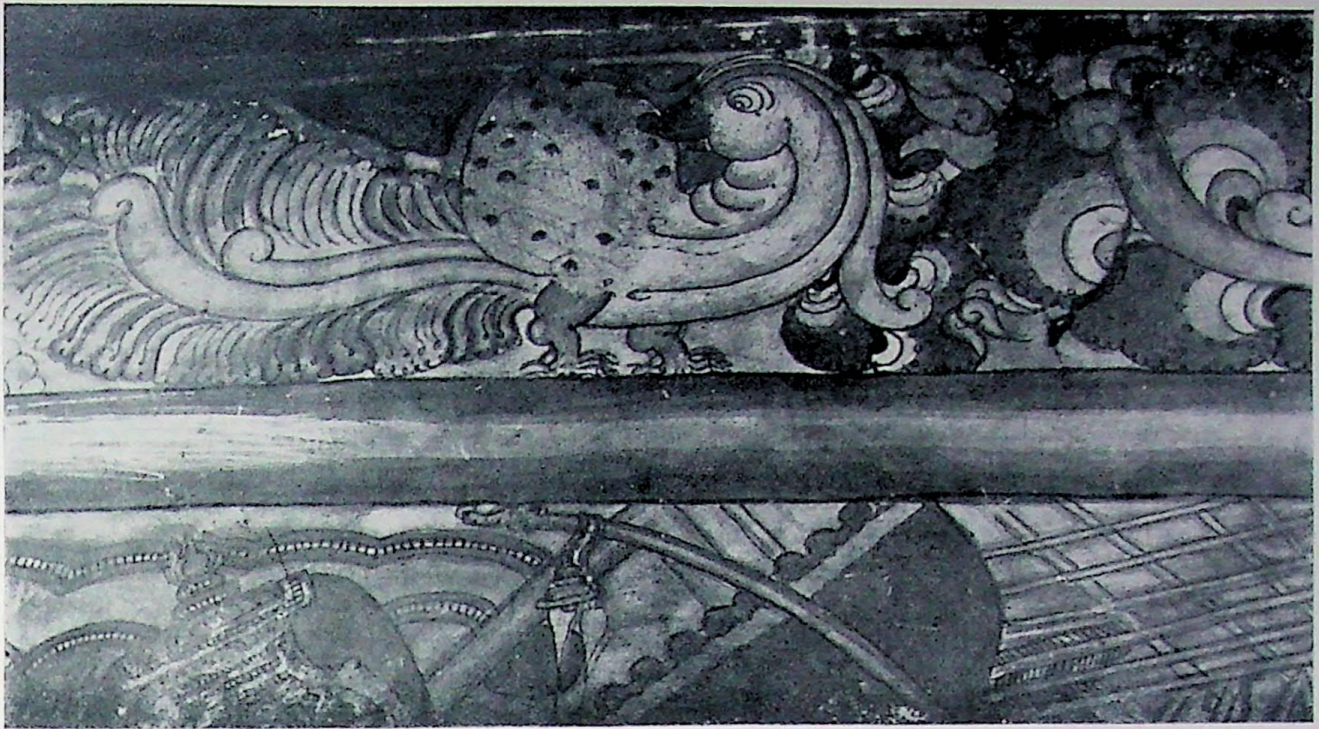



PLATE 133—Thirukkodithnam peacock detail.

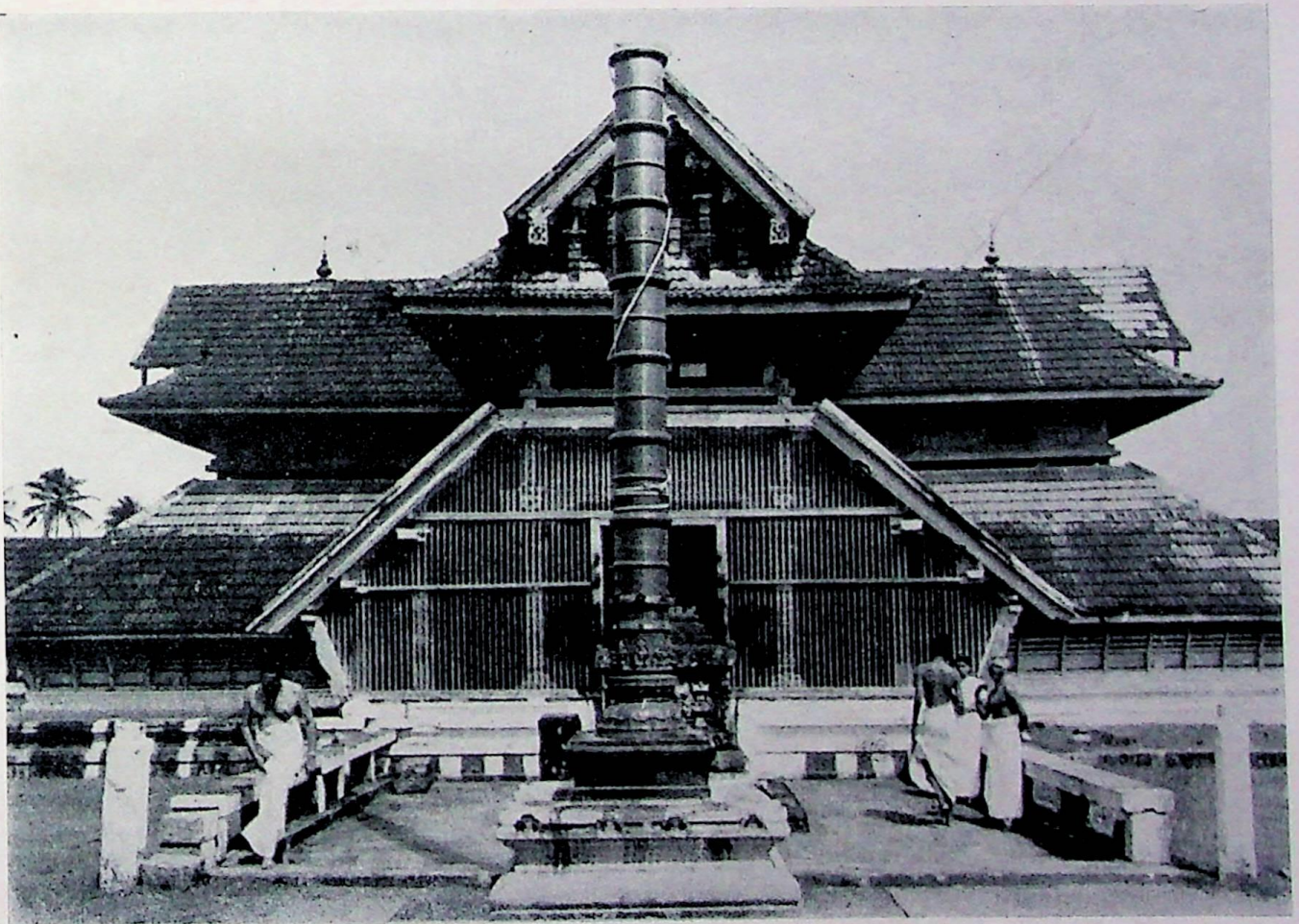



PLATE 134—Entrance *gopura* from within the outer wall at Śrī Mahādeva temple, Ettumanur, Kottayam District.

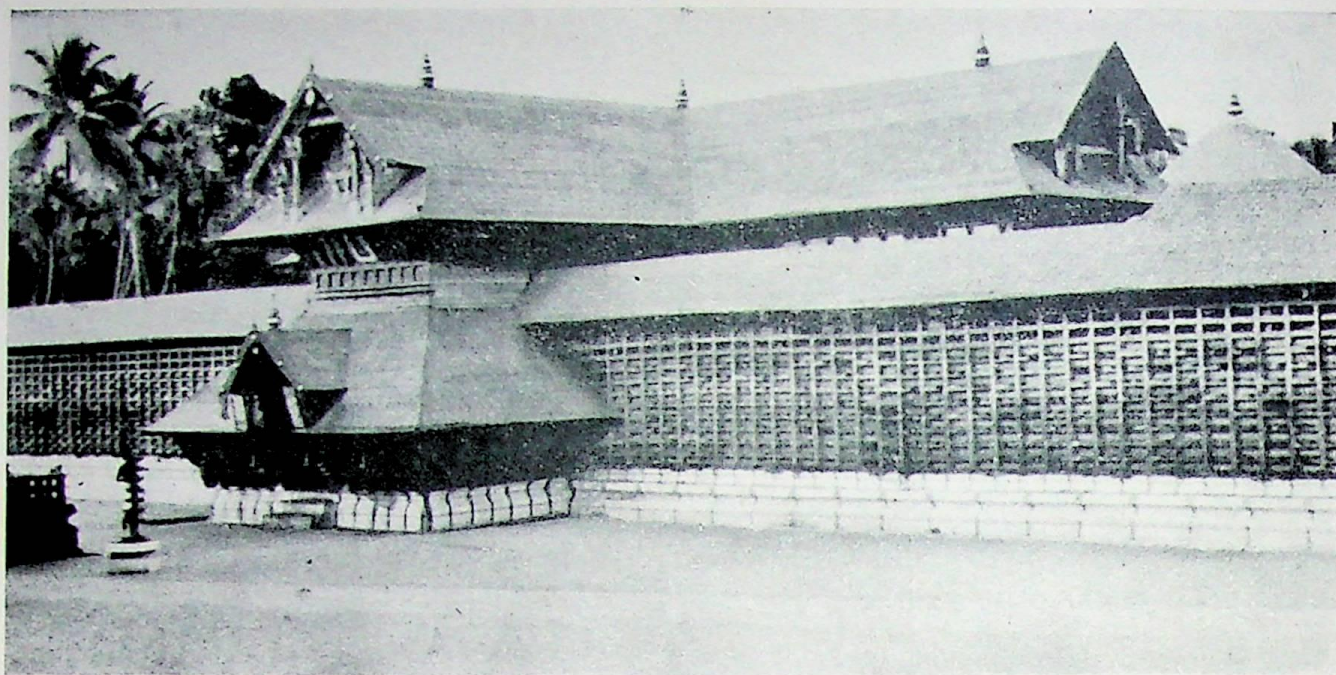



PLATE 135—Inner *Prākāra* and porch, Ettumanur.

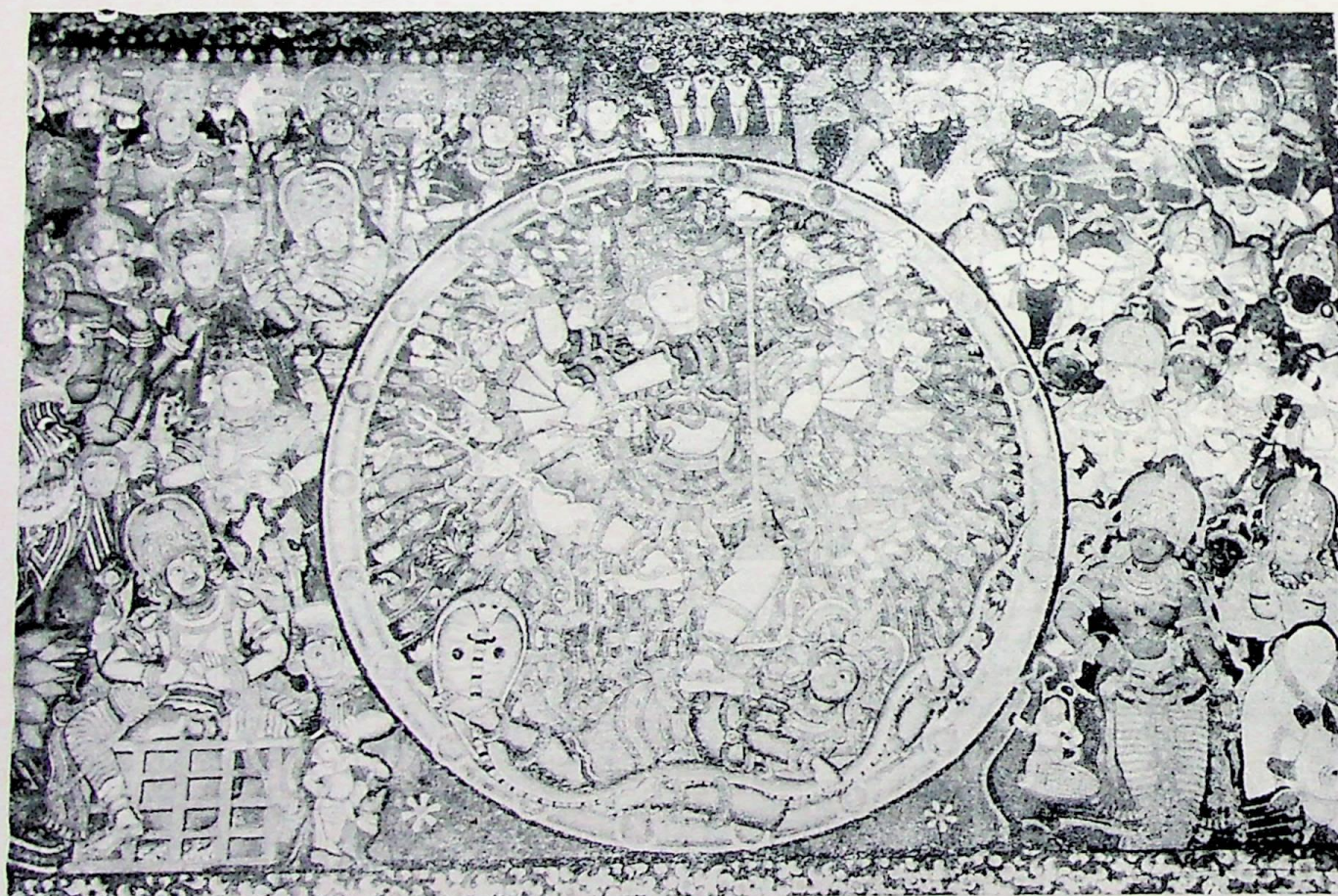



PLATE 136—Mural painting of Śiva Natarāja at Ettumanur, Kottayam District.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

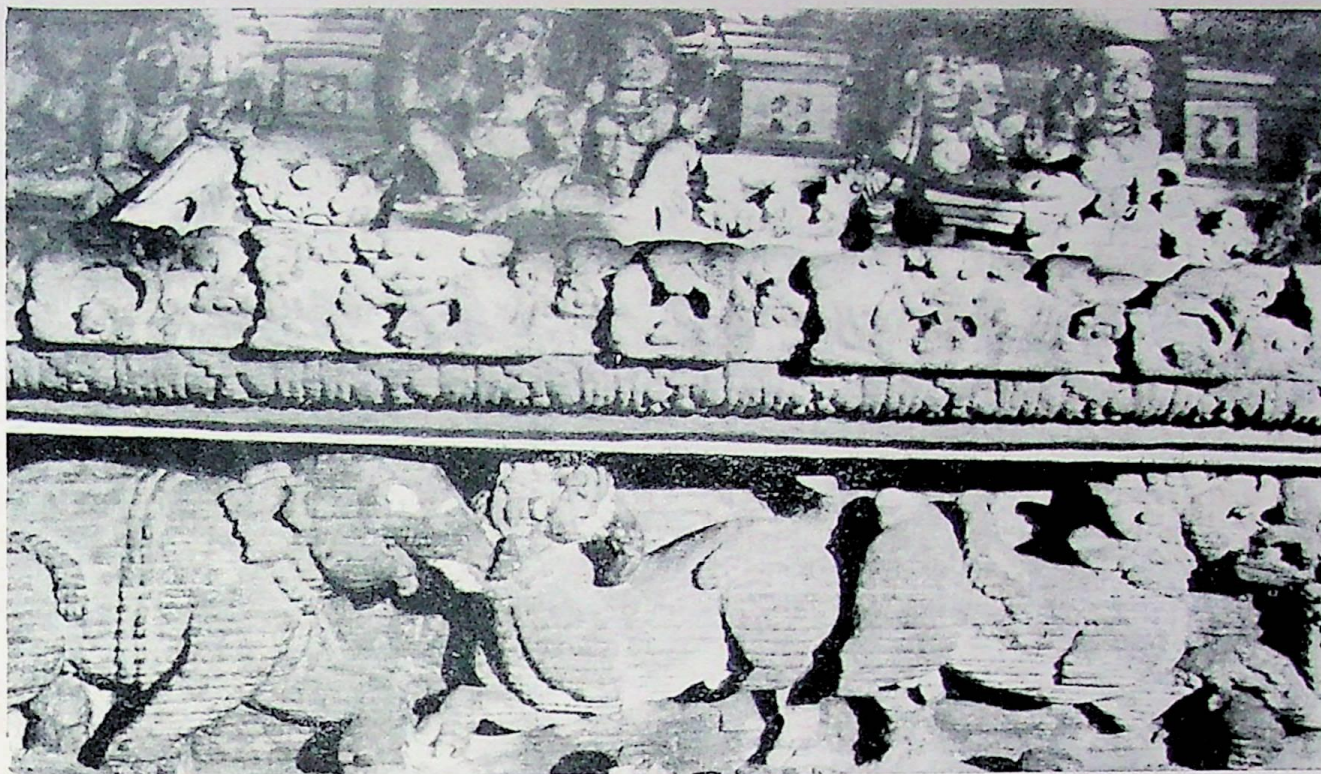



PLATE 137—Wooden frieze at Ettumanur.

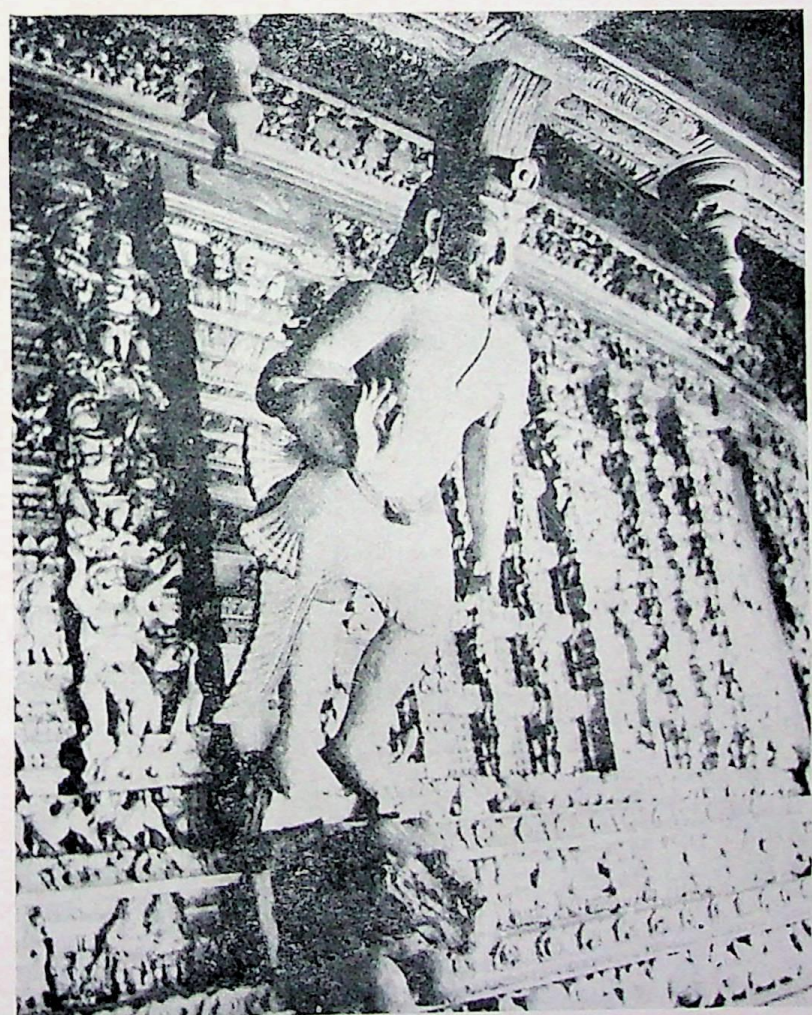



PLATE 138—Bracket gure, Ettumanur.

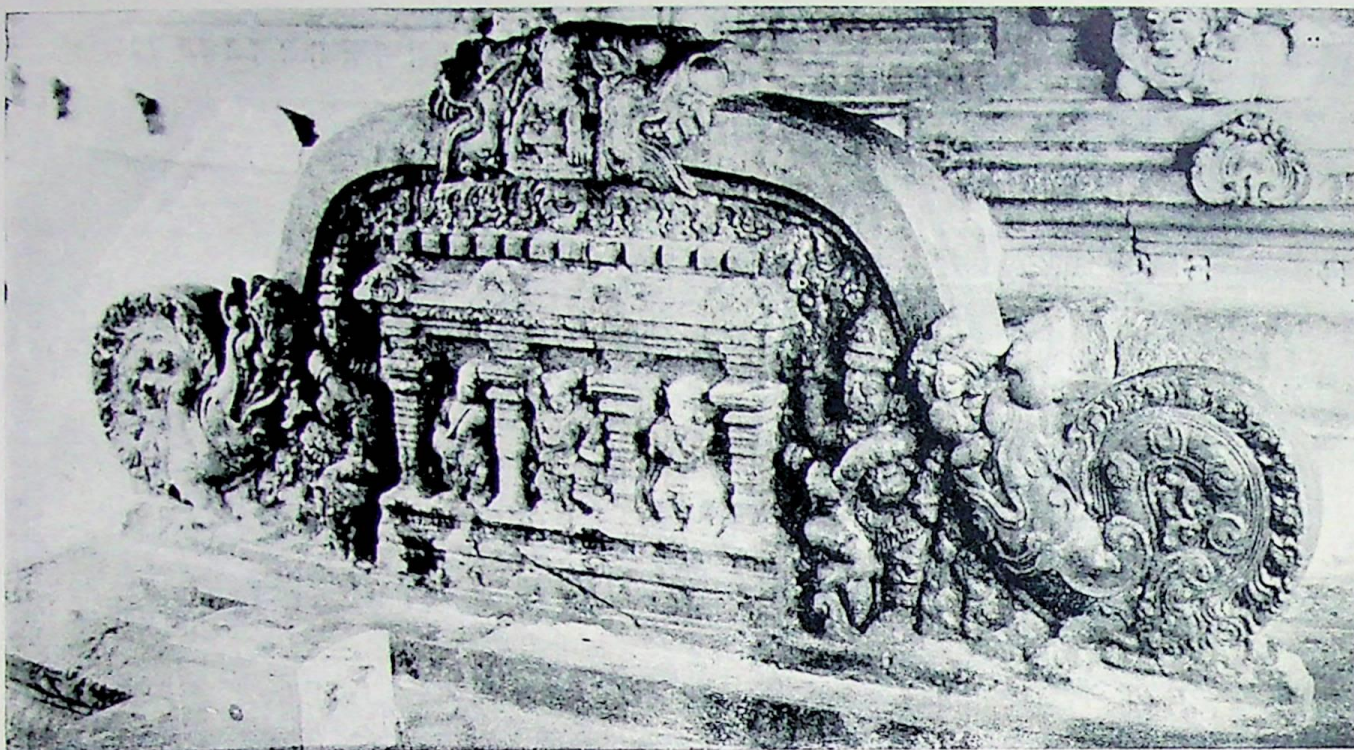



PLATE 139—*Sopāna* balustrade, Ettumanur.

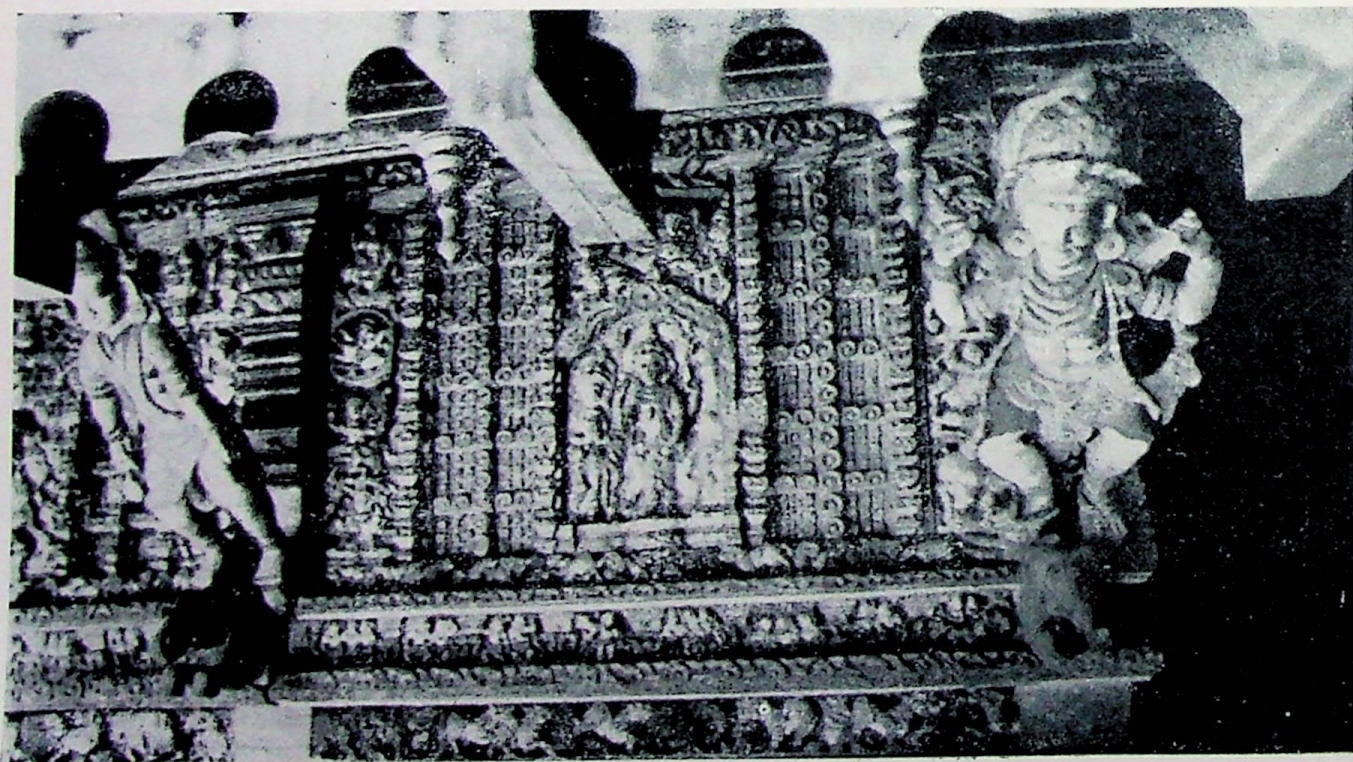



PLATE 140—Wooden wall and brackets, Ettumanur.

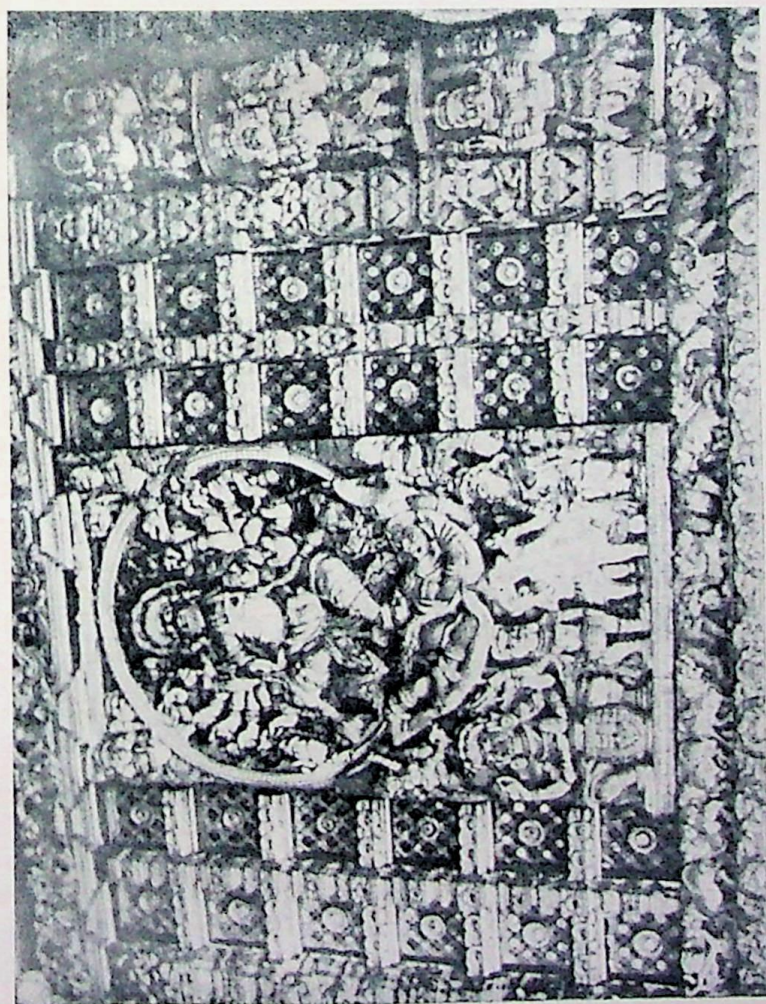



PLATE 141—Relief carving of Śiva Naṭarāja, Ettumanur.

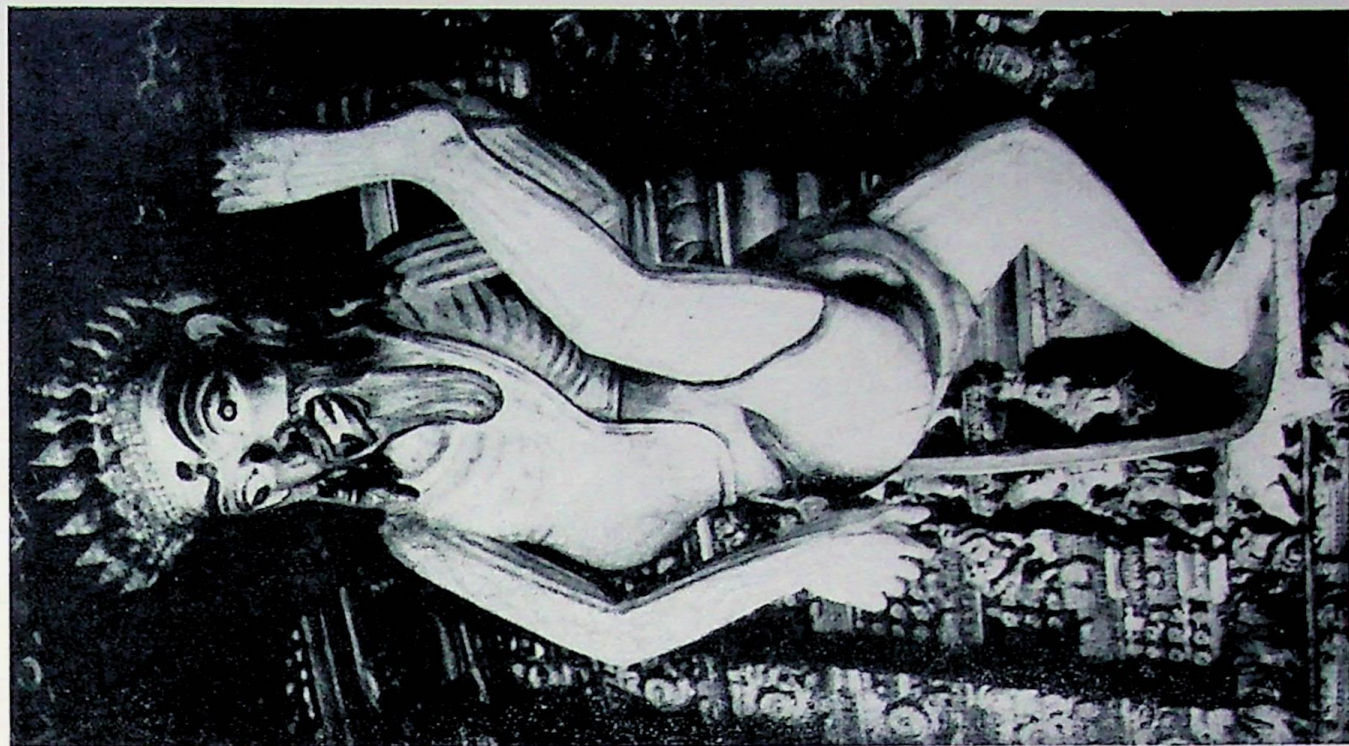



PLATE 142—*Rishi* bracket figure at Ettumanur.

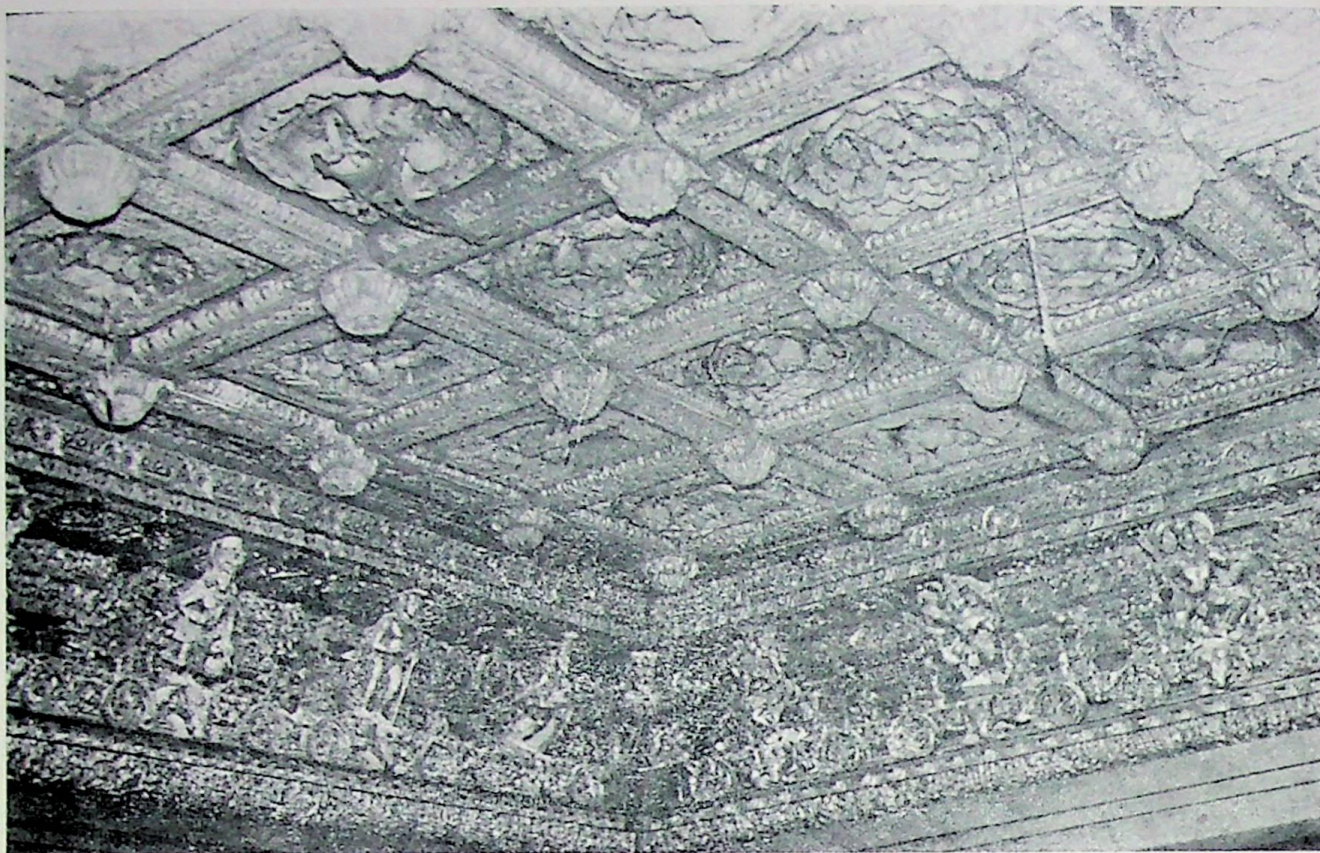



PLATE 143—*Namaskāra maṇḍapa* ceiling, Ettumanur.

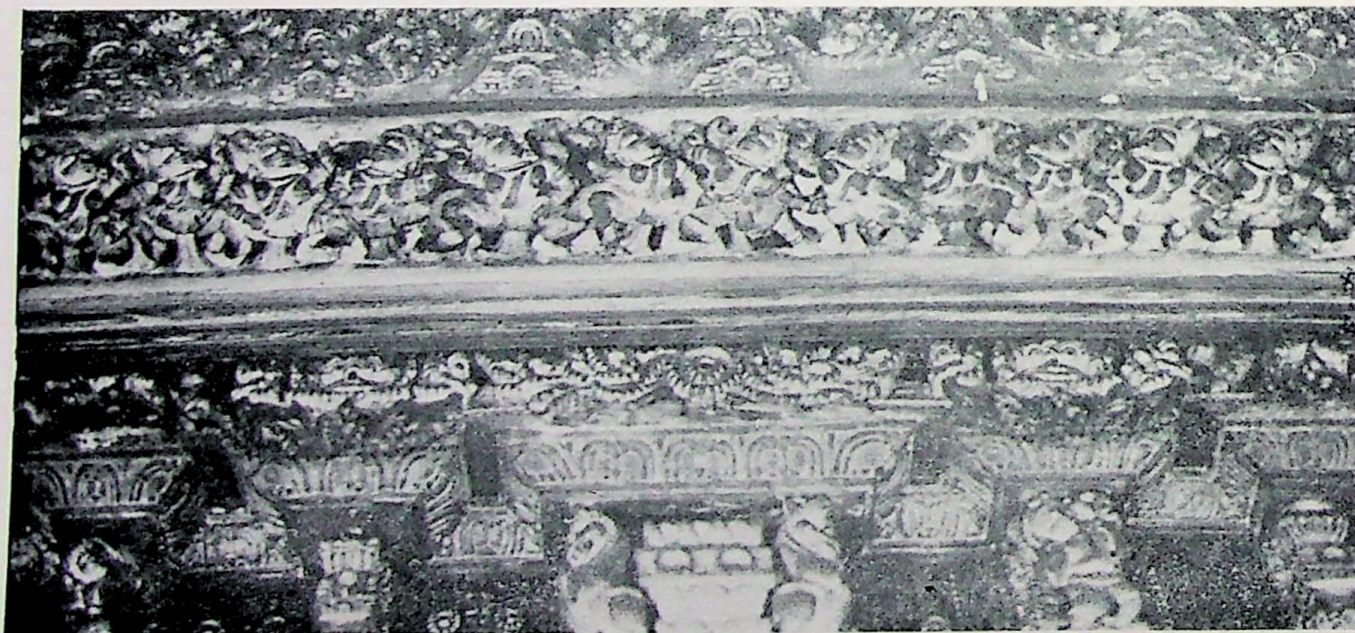



PLATE 144—Miniature frieze, Ettumanur *namaskāra maṇḍapa*.

PLATE 145—Mural fragment of Tirunandikara, Kanyakumari Distt.

PLATE 146—Kṛṣṇa at Thiruvanchikulam, Trichur District.

PLATE 147—Fragmentary wall panel at the Tali temple, Calicut, Kozhikode District.

PLATE 148—Shrine room wall, Padmanabhapuram.

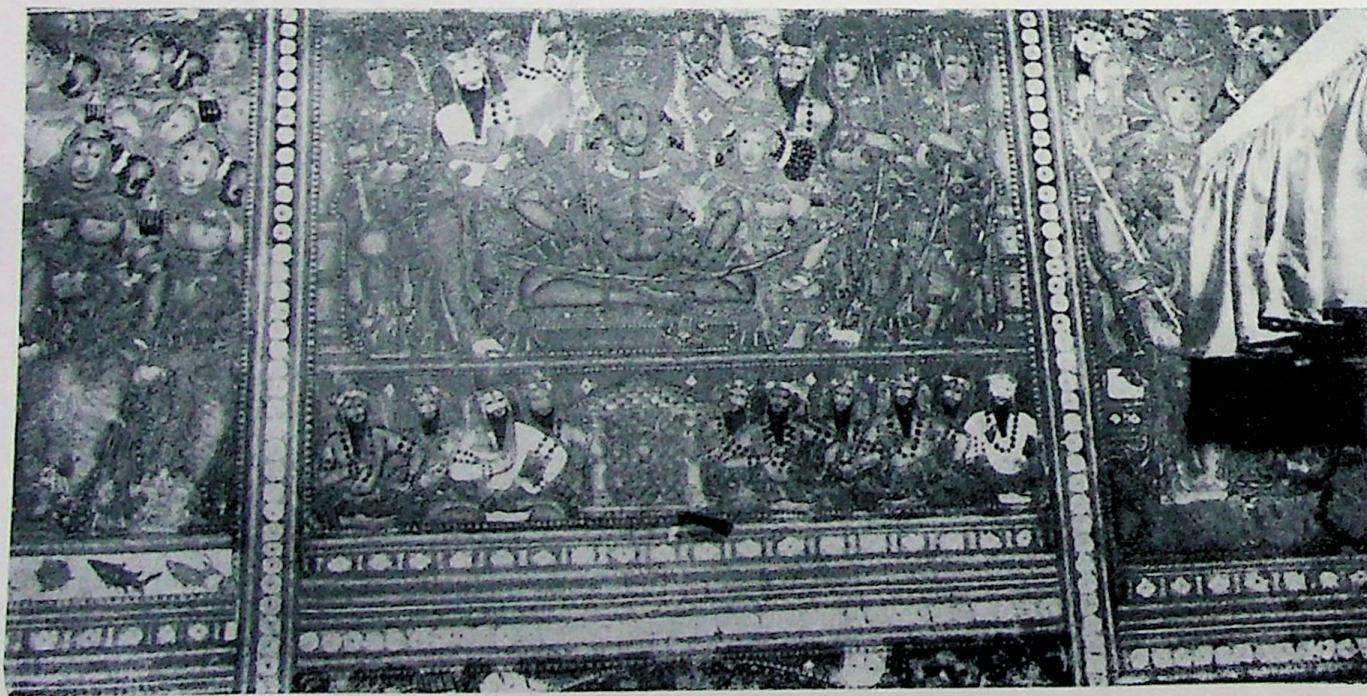



PLATE 149—Approach to the Śri Mahādeva temple, Kaviyur, Alleppey Distt.

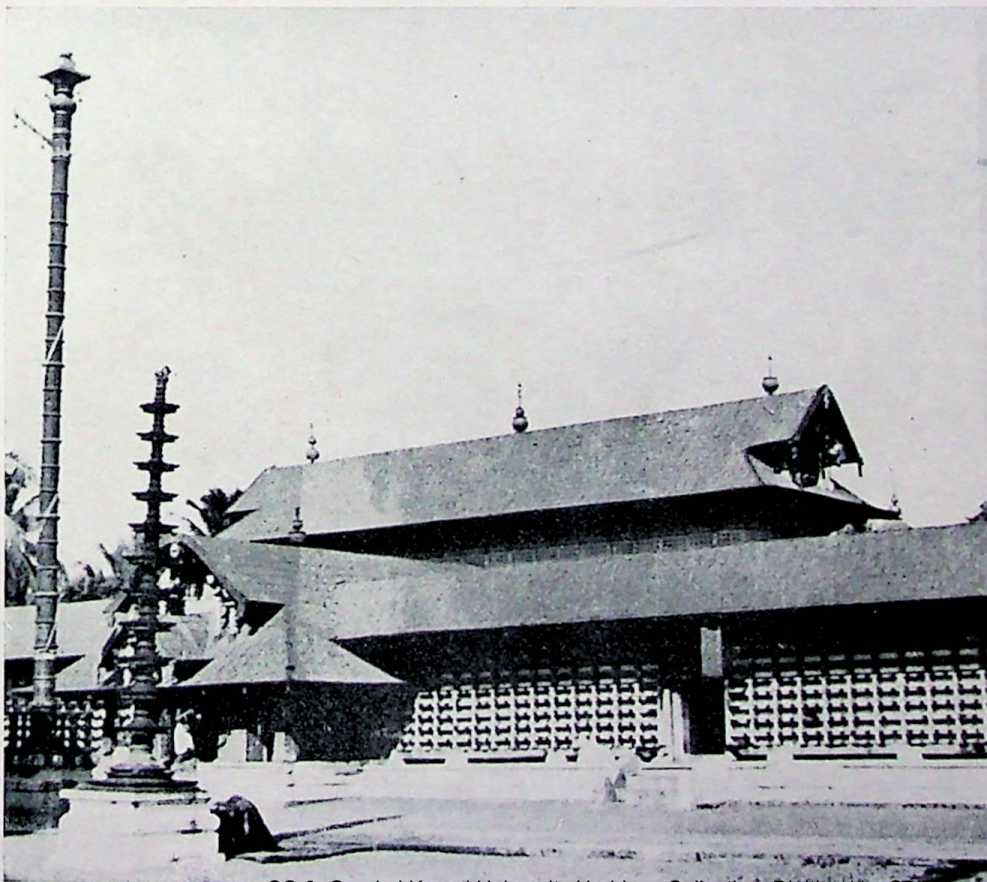



PLATE 150—Inner *prākāra* at Kaviyur.

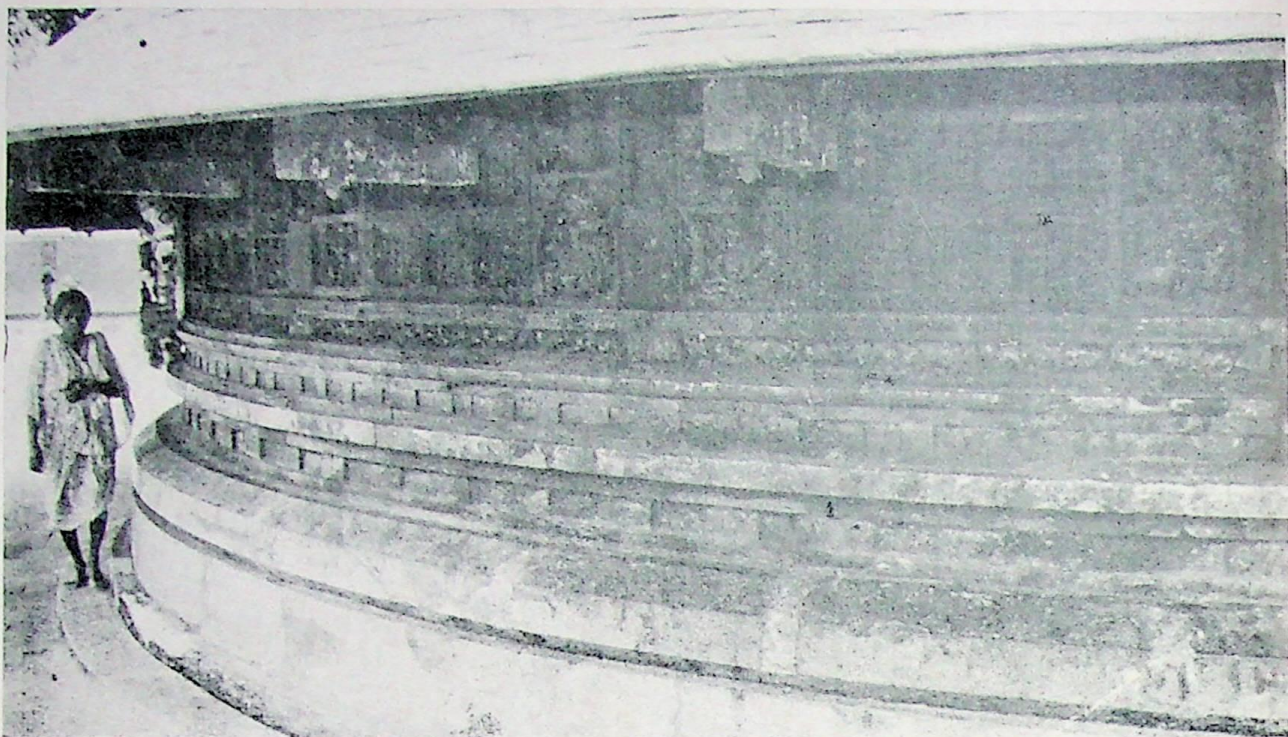



PLATE 151—Inner ambulatory of Kaviyur.

PLATE 152—Wall carving, Kaviyur.

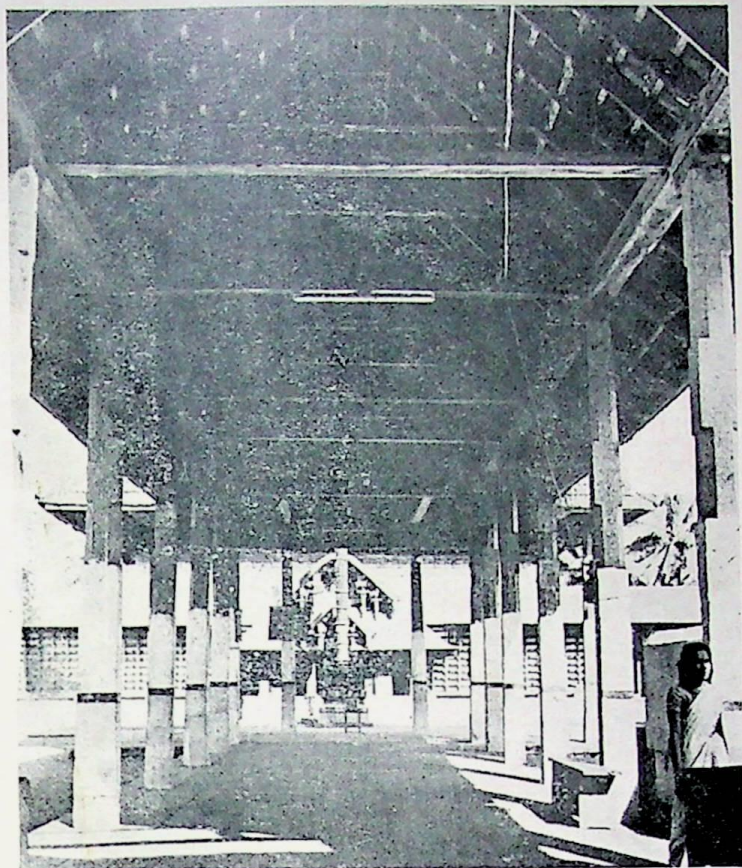



PLATE 153—*Maṇḍapa* approach, Kaviyur.

PLATE 154—*Srikovil* wall, Kaviyur.

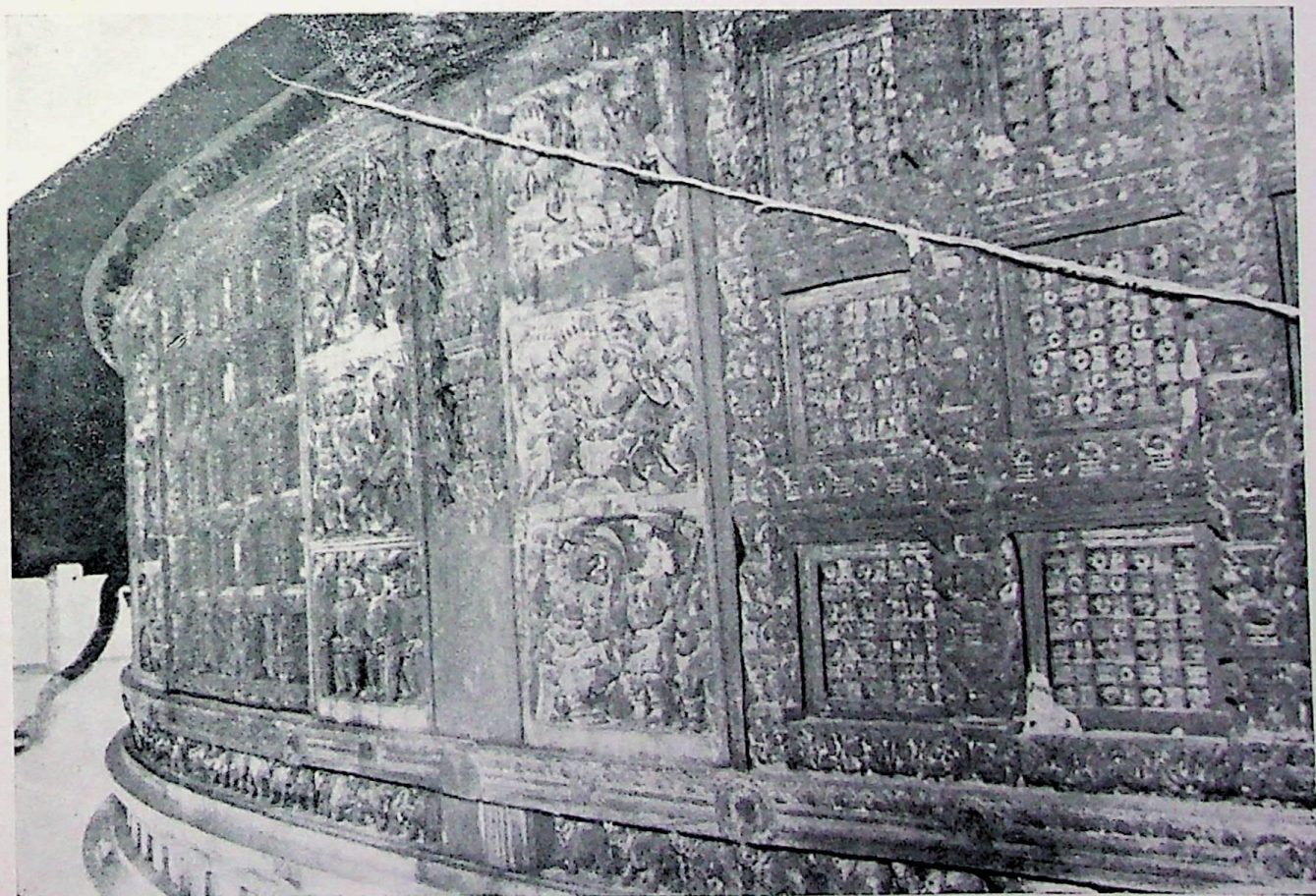
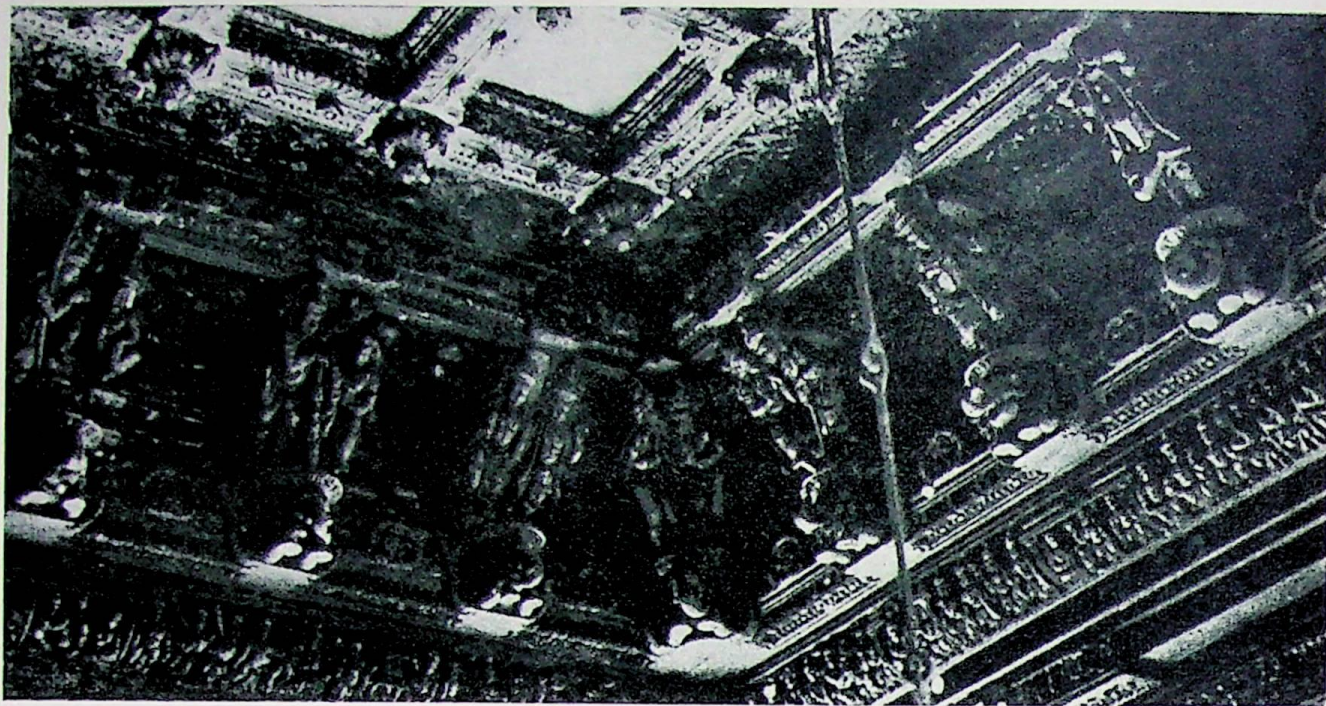



PLATE 155—*Maṇḍapa* ceiling, Kaviyur.

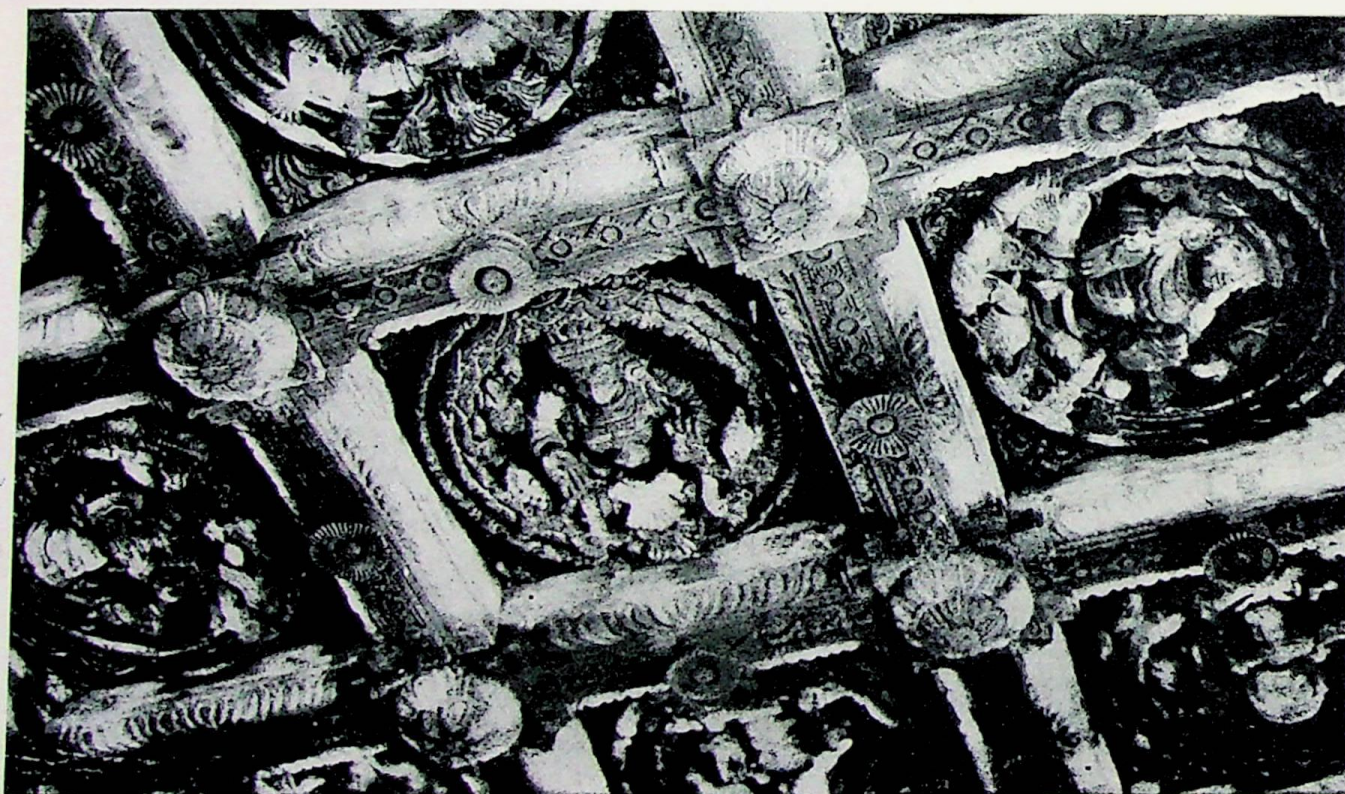



PLATE 156—Directional guardians in the *namaskāra maṇḍapa*, Kaviyur.

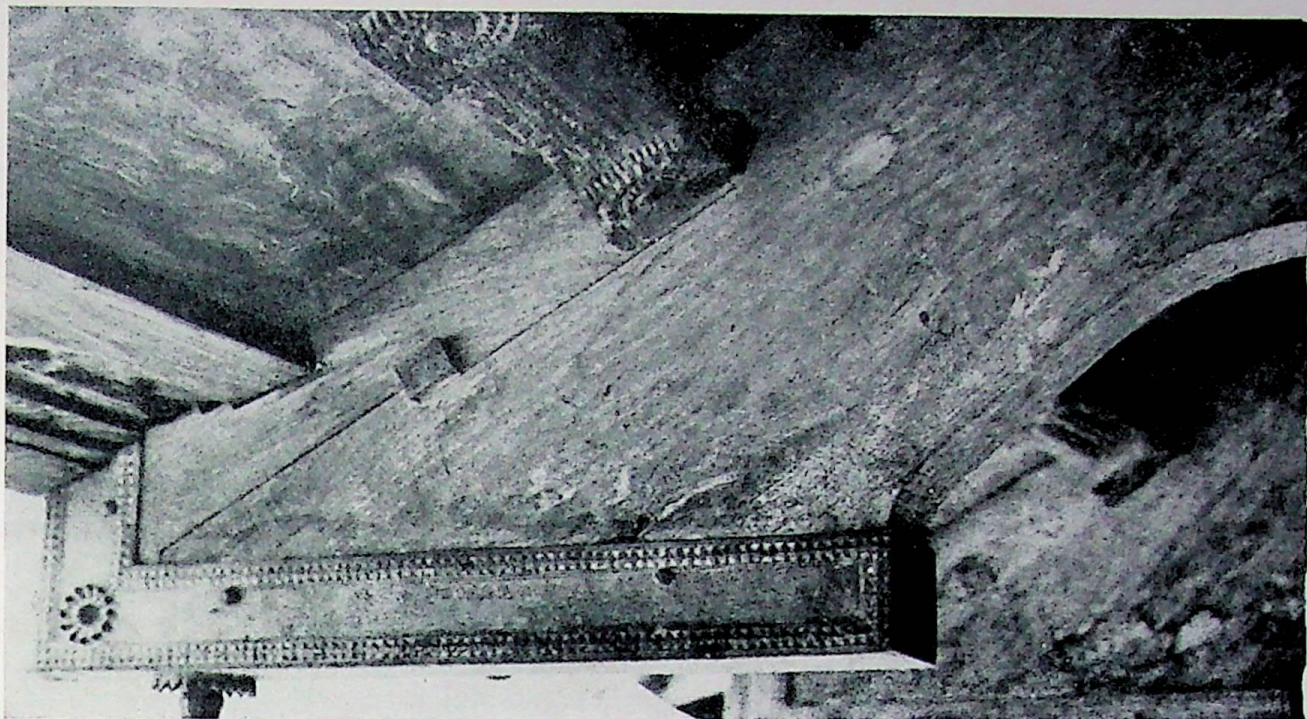



PLATE 157—Rafter shoes, Kaviyur.

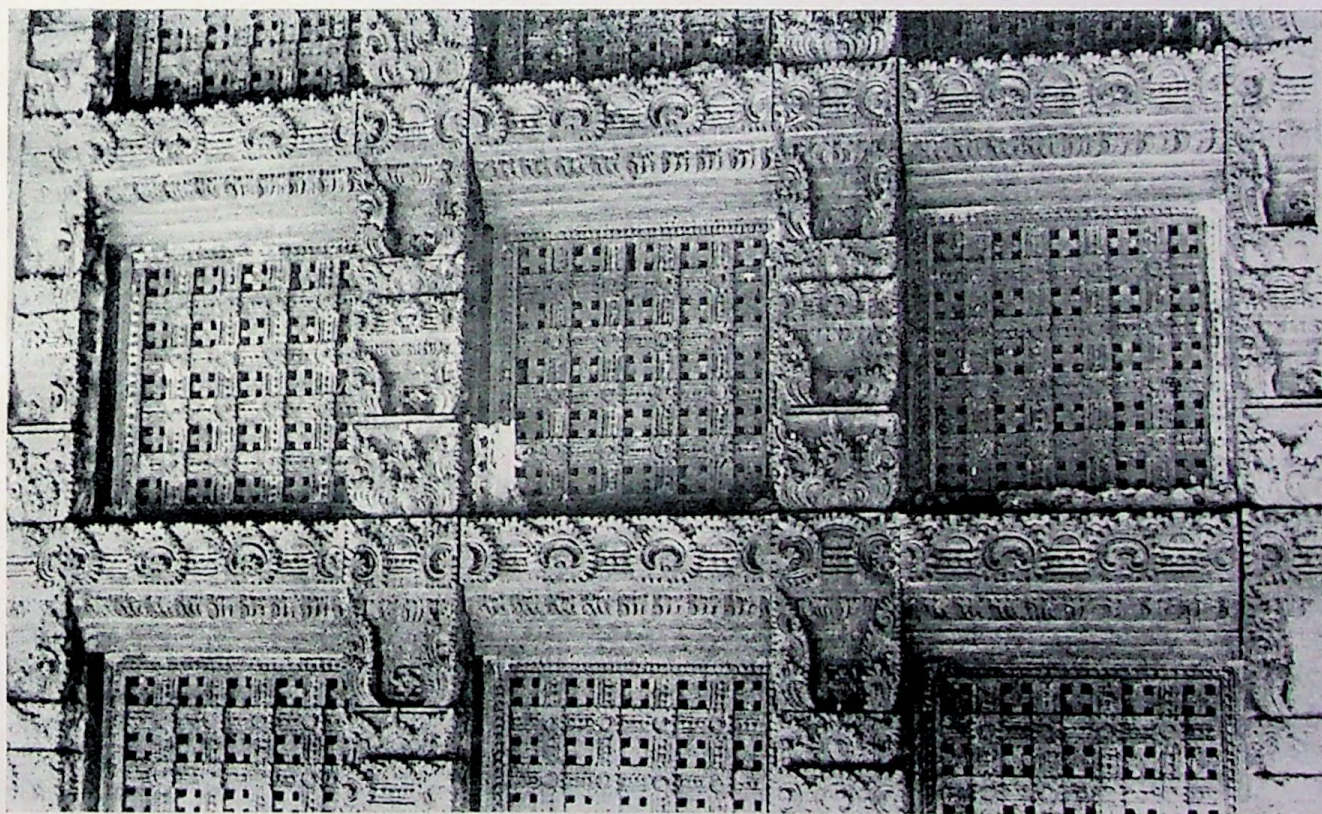



PLATE 158—*Jyāli* screen, Kaviyur.

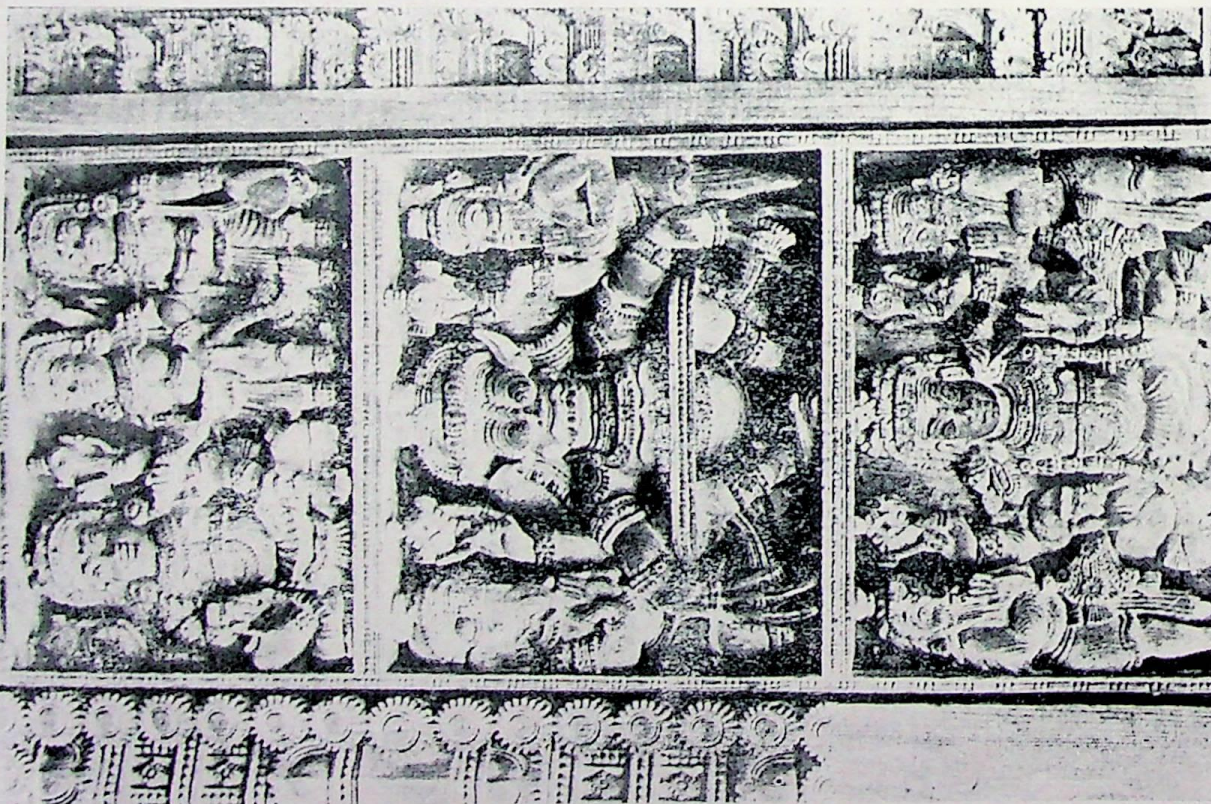



PLATE 159— Narasiṃha panel, Kaviyur.

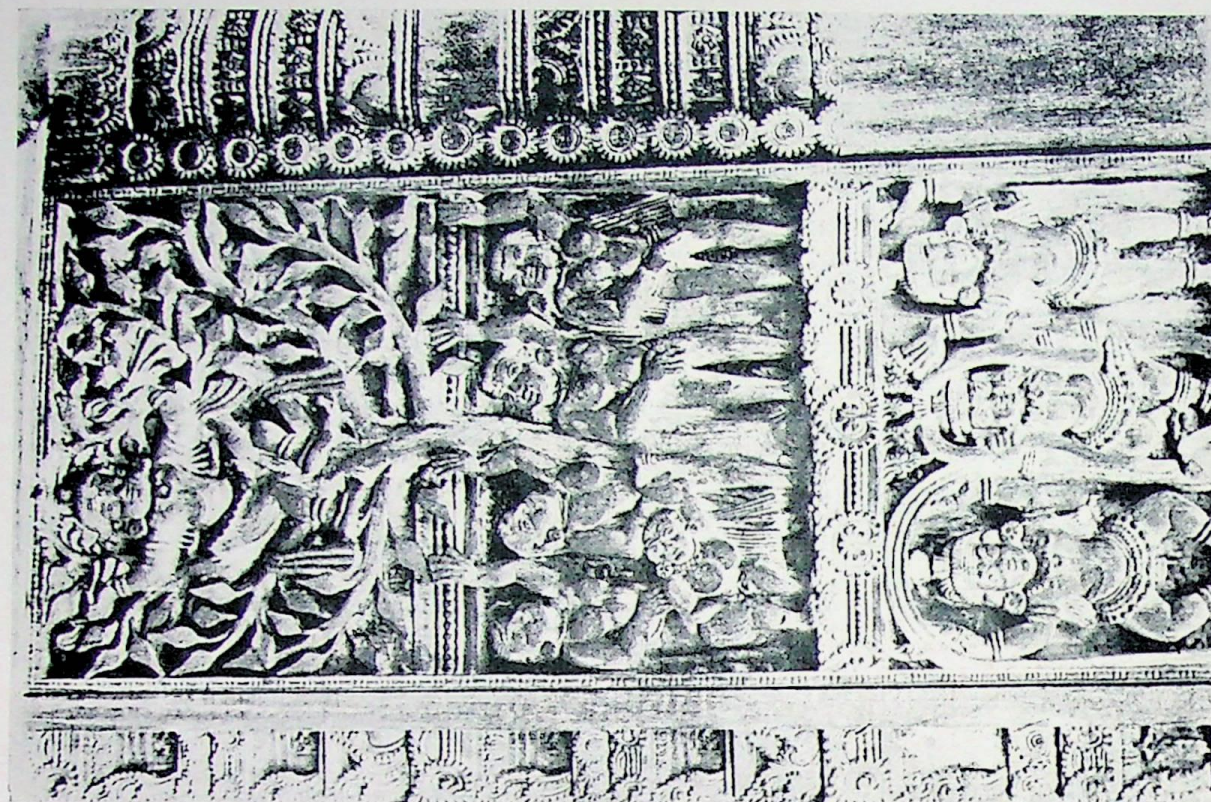



PLATE 160—Kṛṣṇa steals *gopī* garments, Kaviyur.

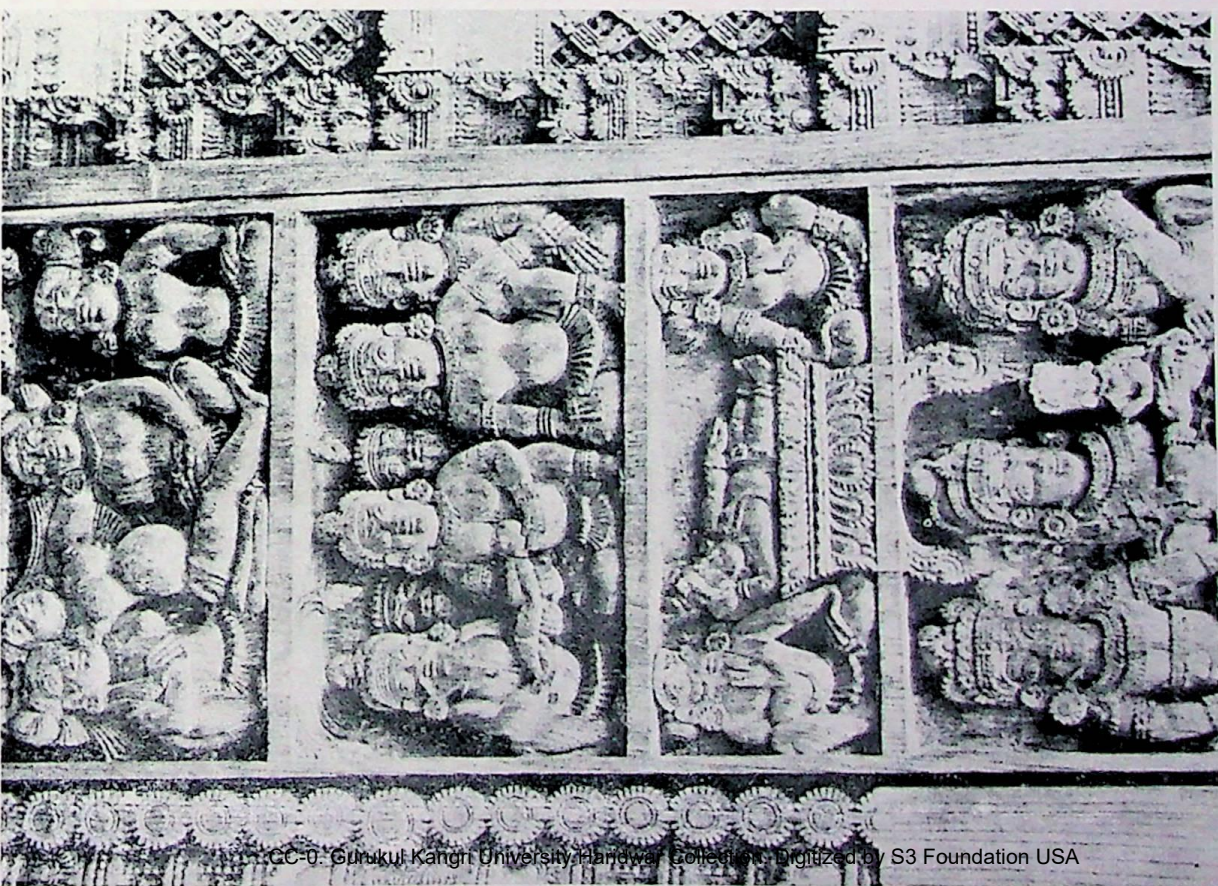



Plate 161—Kṛṣṇa stories, Kaviyur.

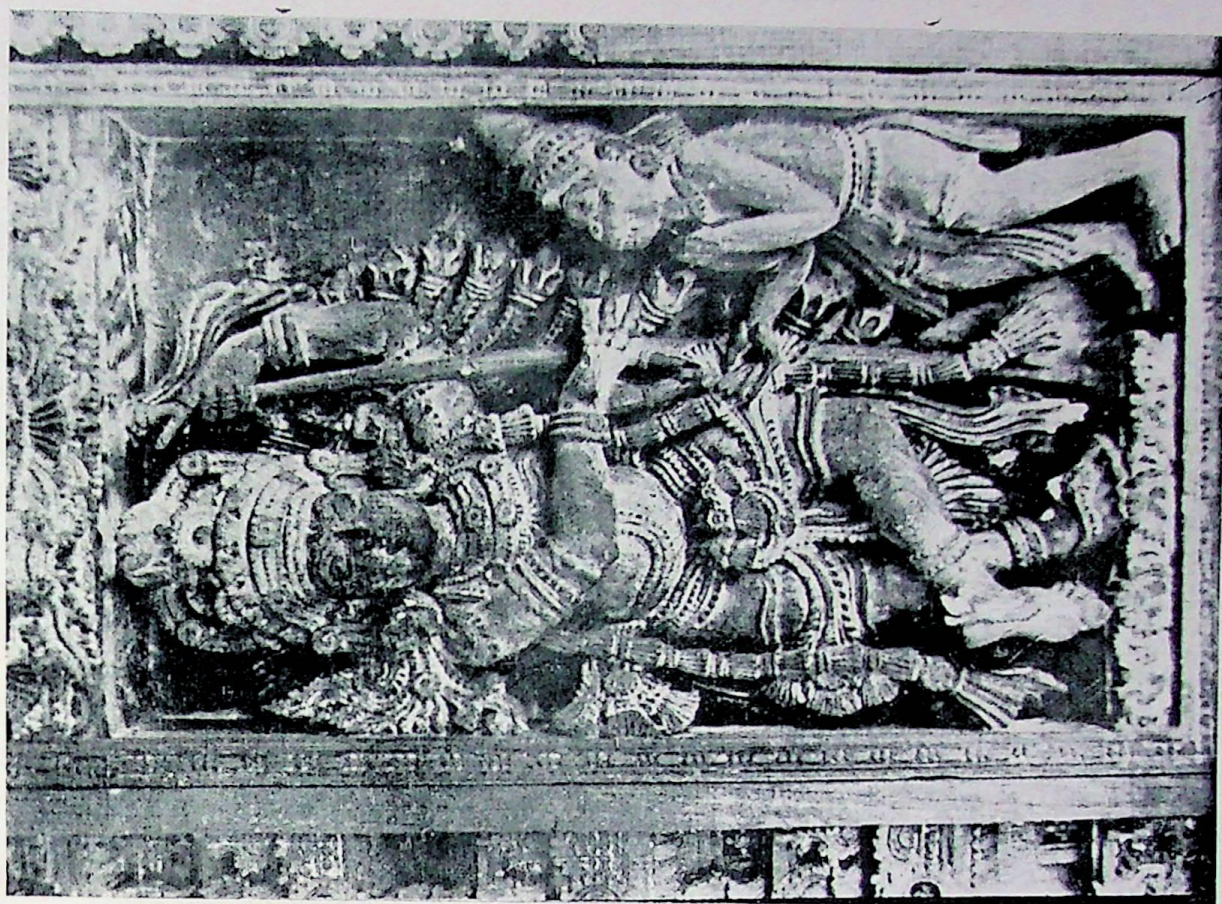



Plate 162—Rāma with Hanumant, Kaviyur.

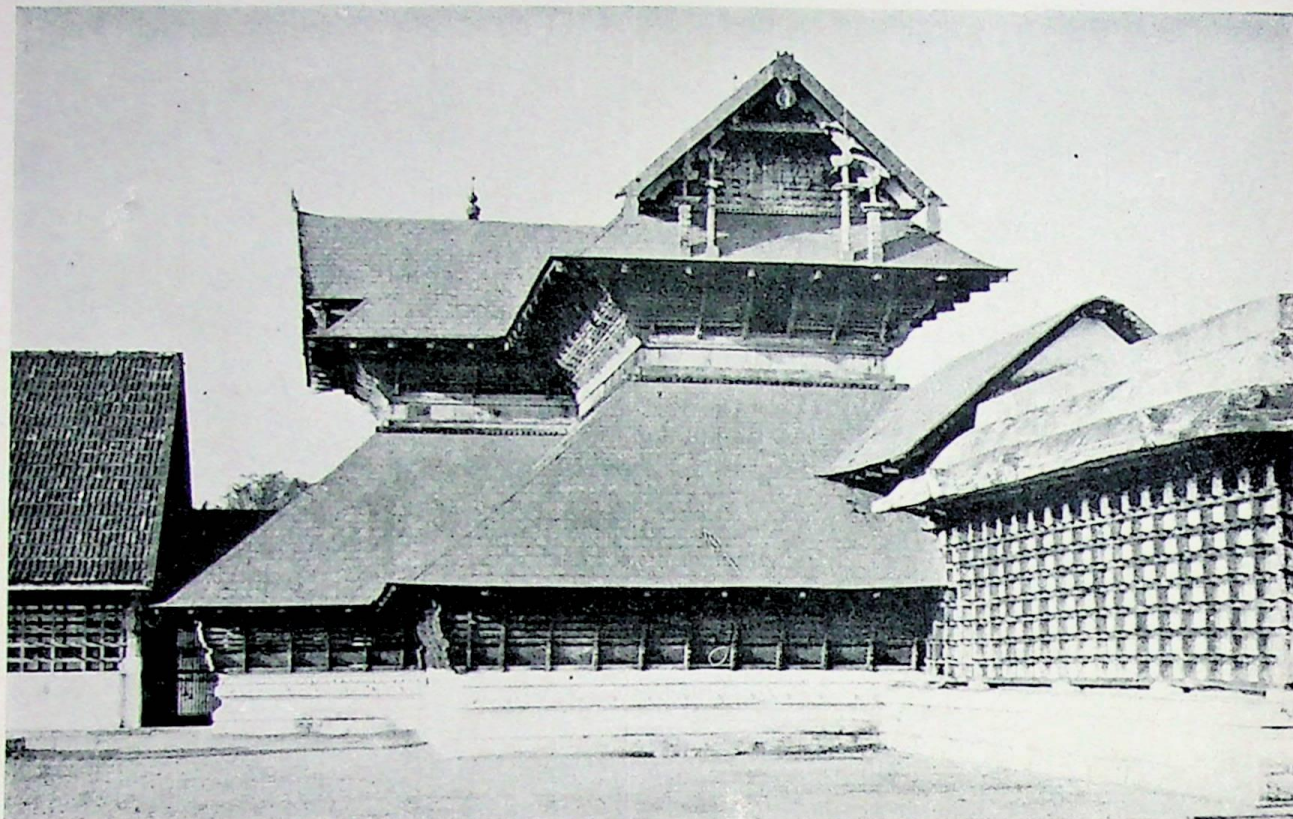



PLATE 163—Temple of Śrī Vallabha, Tiruvalla, Alleppey District, entrance.

PLATE 164—*Pūjā* before the [illegible] door, Śrī Vallabha temple.

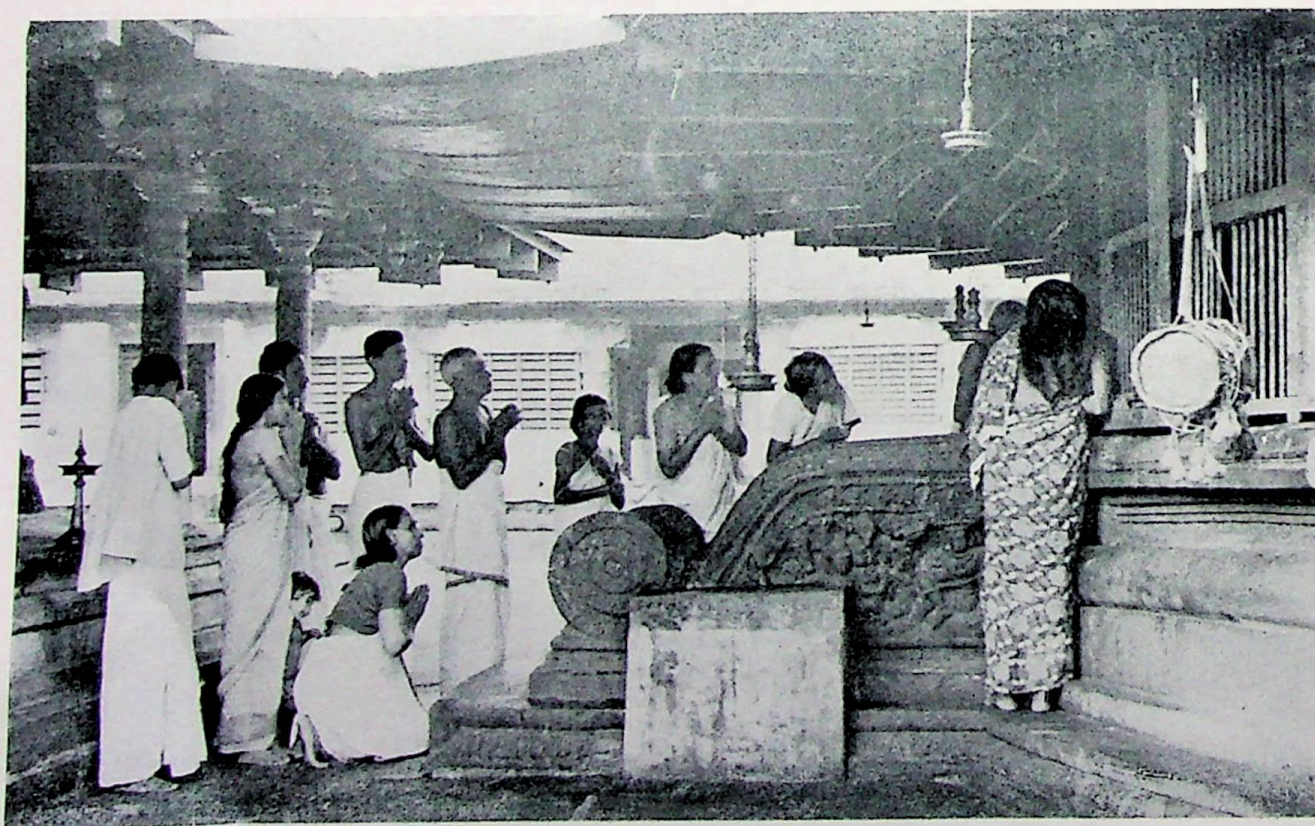



PLATE 165—*Gopuradvāra* structure with golden Garuḍa at Tiruvalla.

PLATE 166—*Srikovil* of Pulliyur Narasiṃha at Chengannur, Alleppey District.

PLATE 167—*Adhiṣṭhāna* detail of the Narasimha temple, Chengannur.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

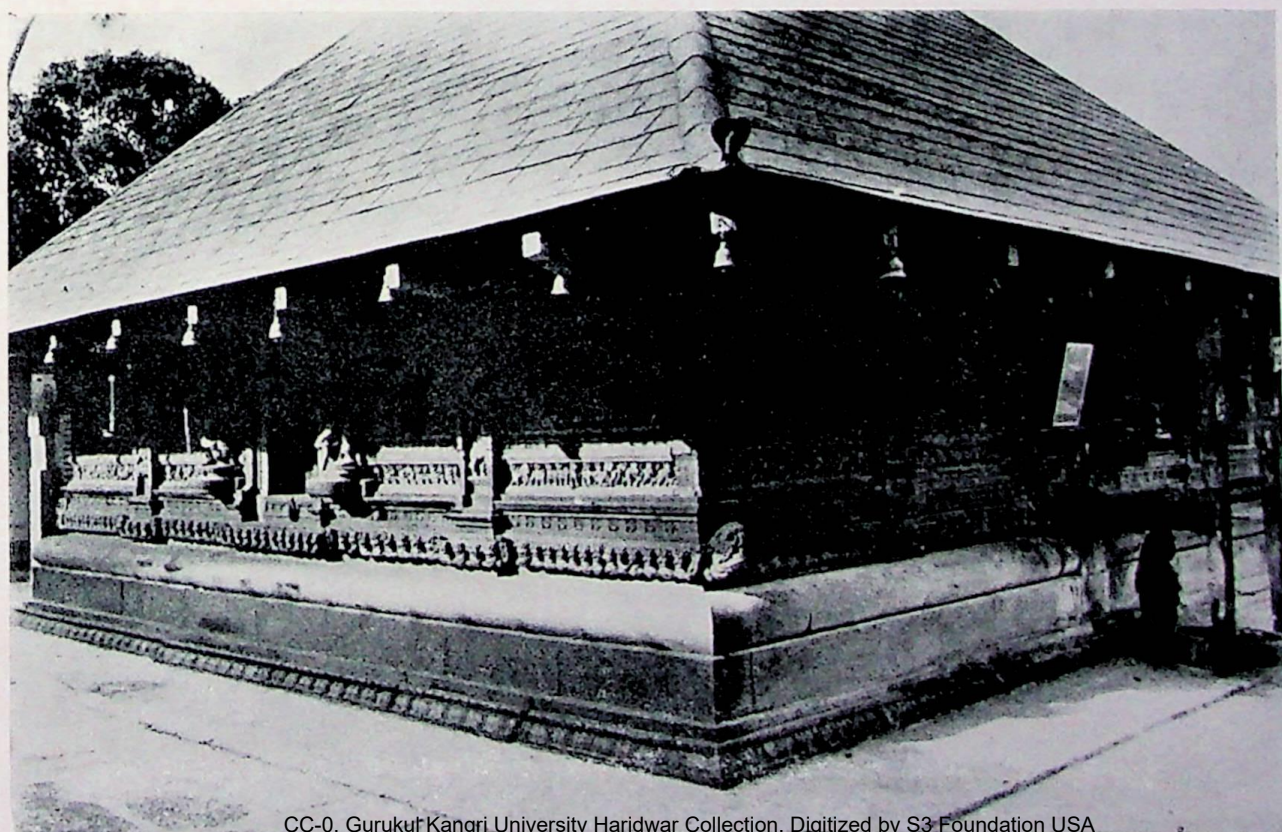
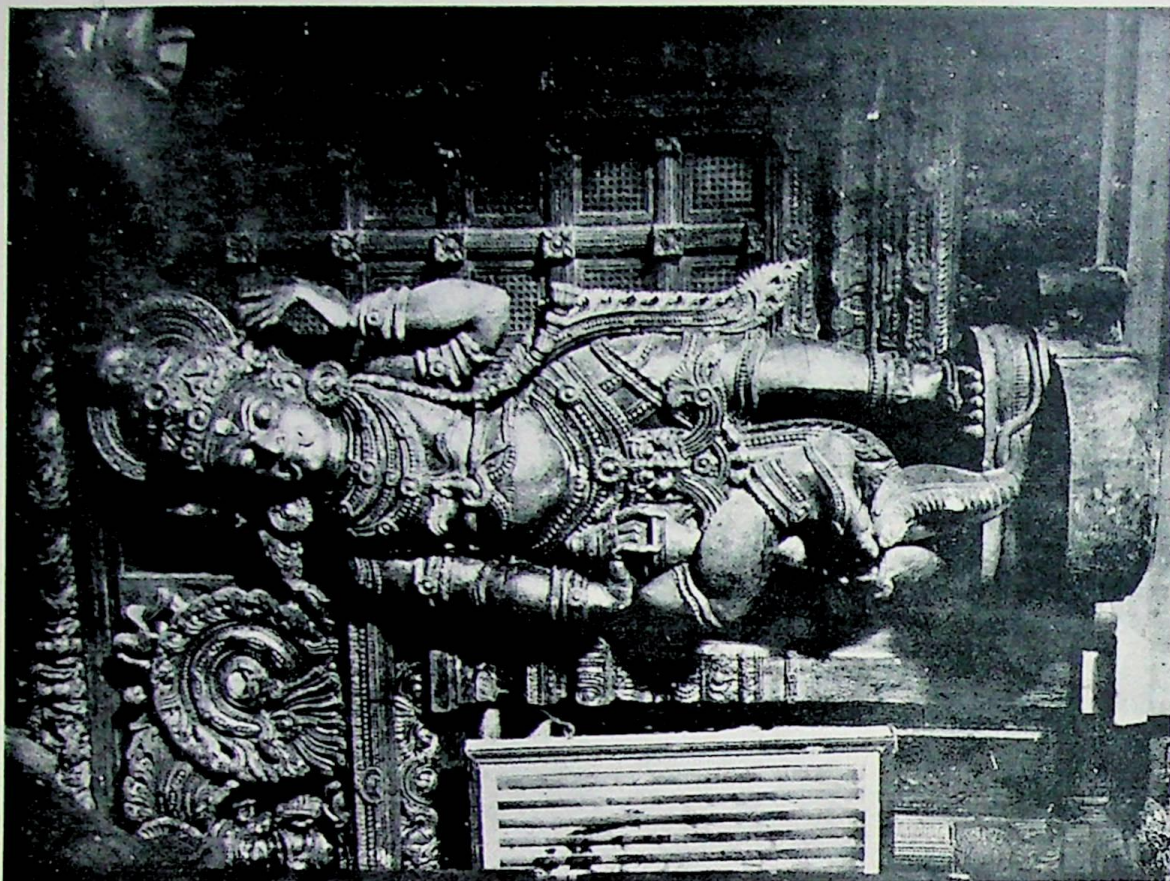



PLATE 168—*Drārapāla* of wood at the Narasiṃha temple, Chengannur.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

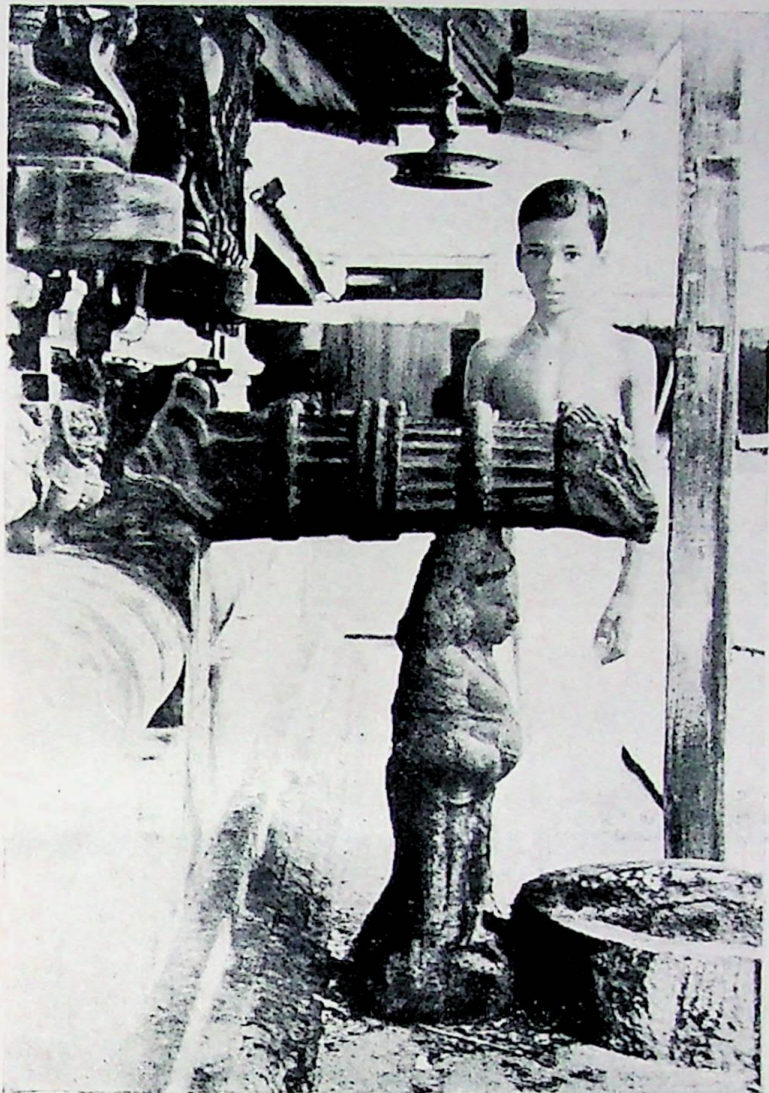



PLATE 169—*Praṇāla* of the Narasiṃha temple, Chengannur.

PLATE 170—Narasiṃha temple cornice detail.

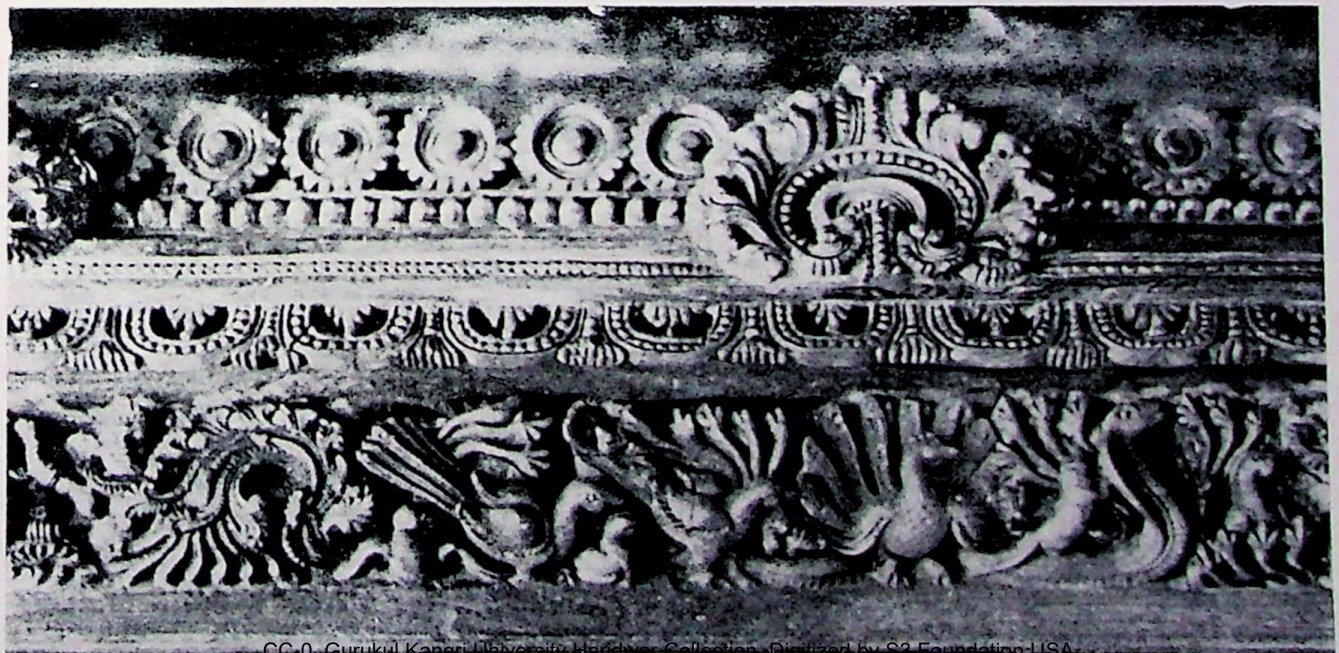
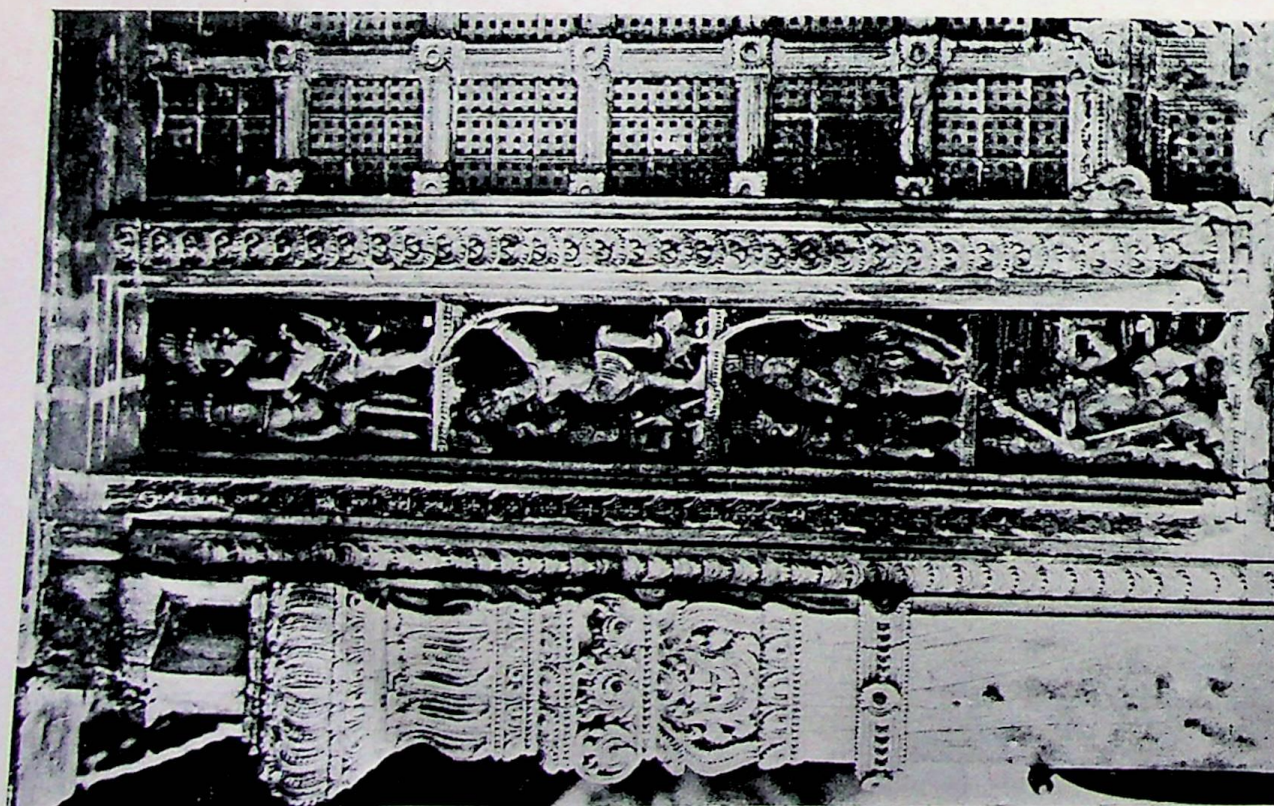



PLATE 172—*Rāmāyaṇa* detail at Pulliyur Narasimha.

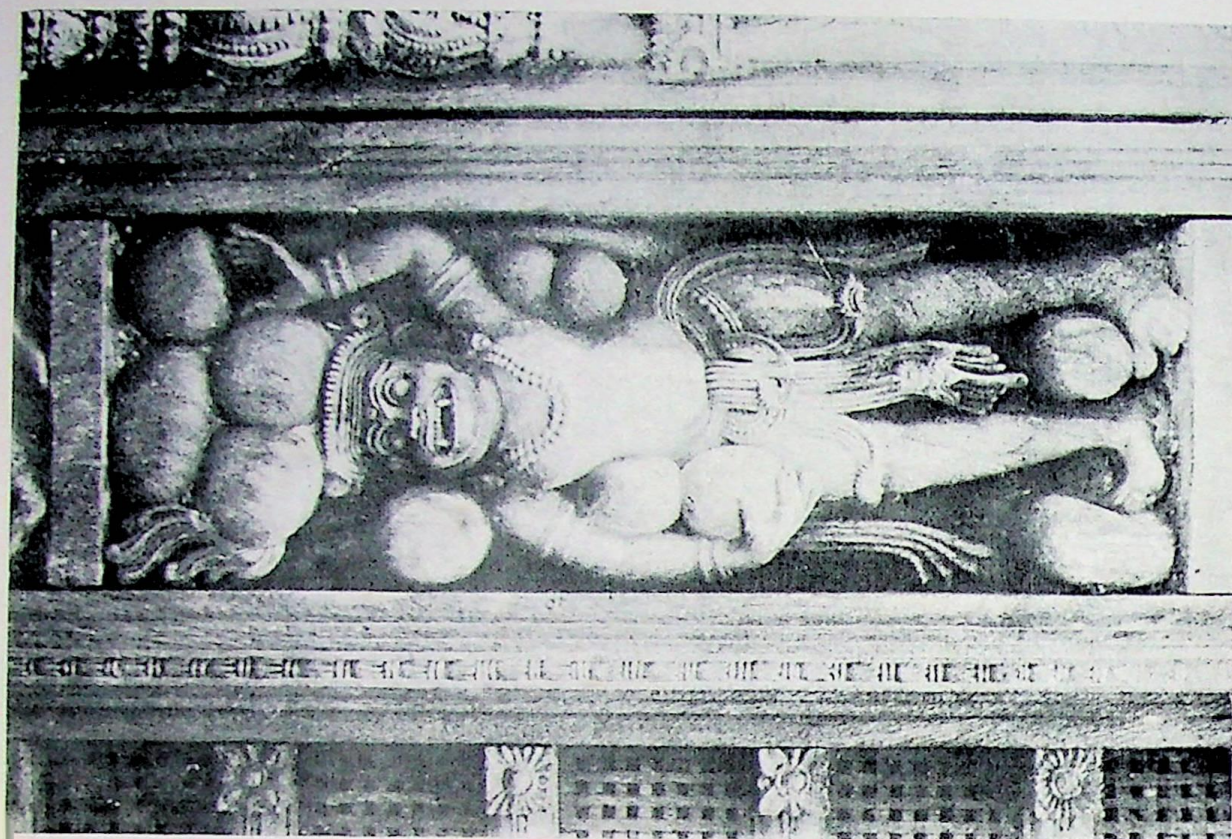



PLATE 171—Wall carvings at Pulliyur Narasiṃha temple.

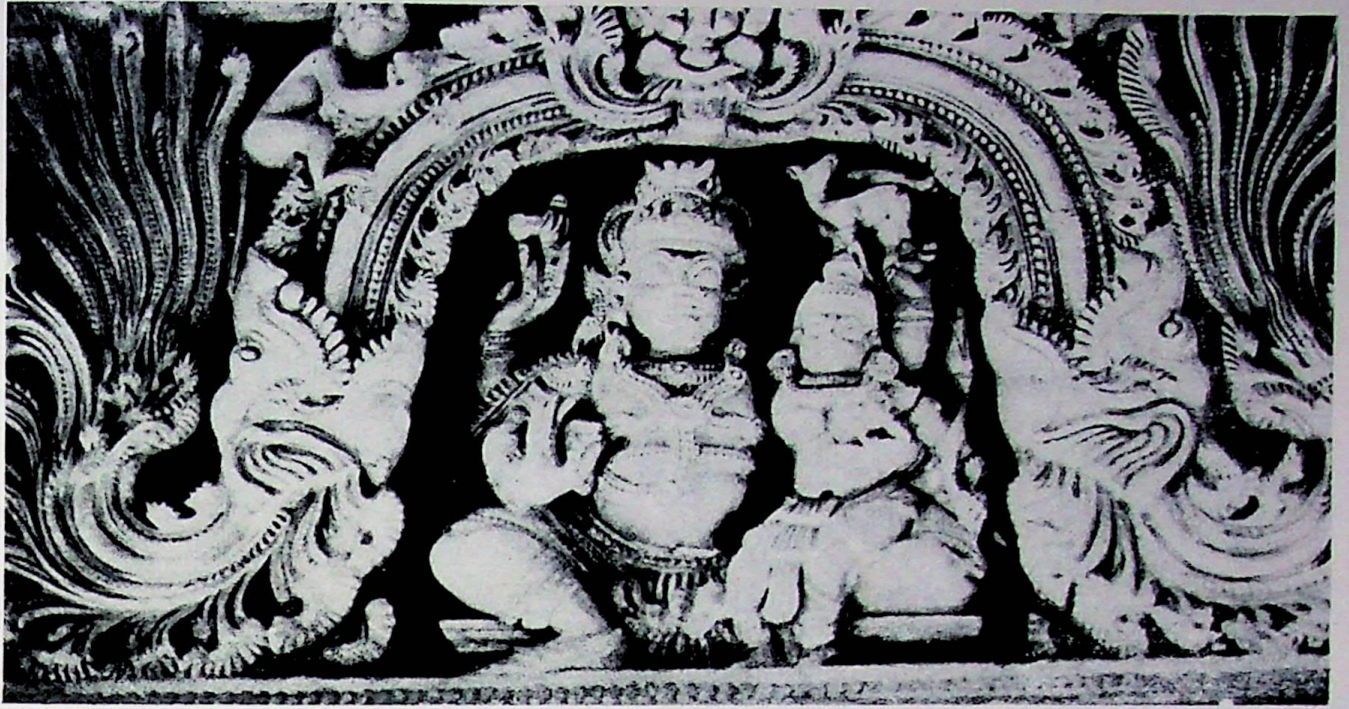



PLATE 173—Śiva and Pārvati carved at Chengannur.

PLATE 174—Śiva Naṭāraja. Chengannur,

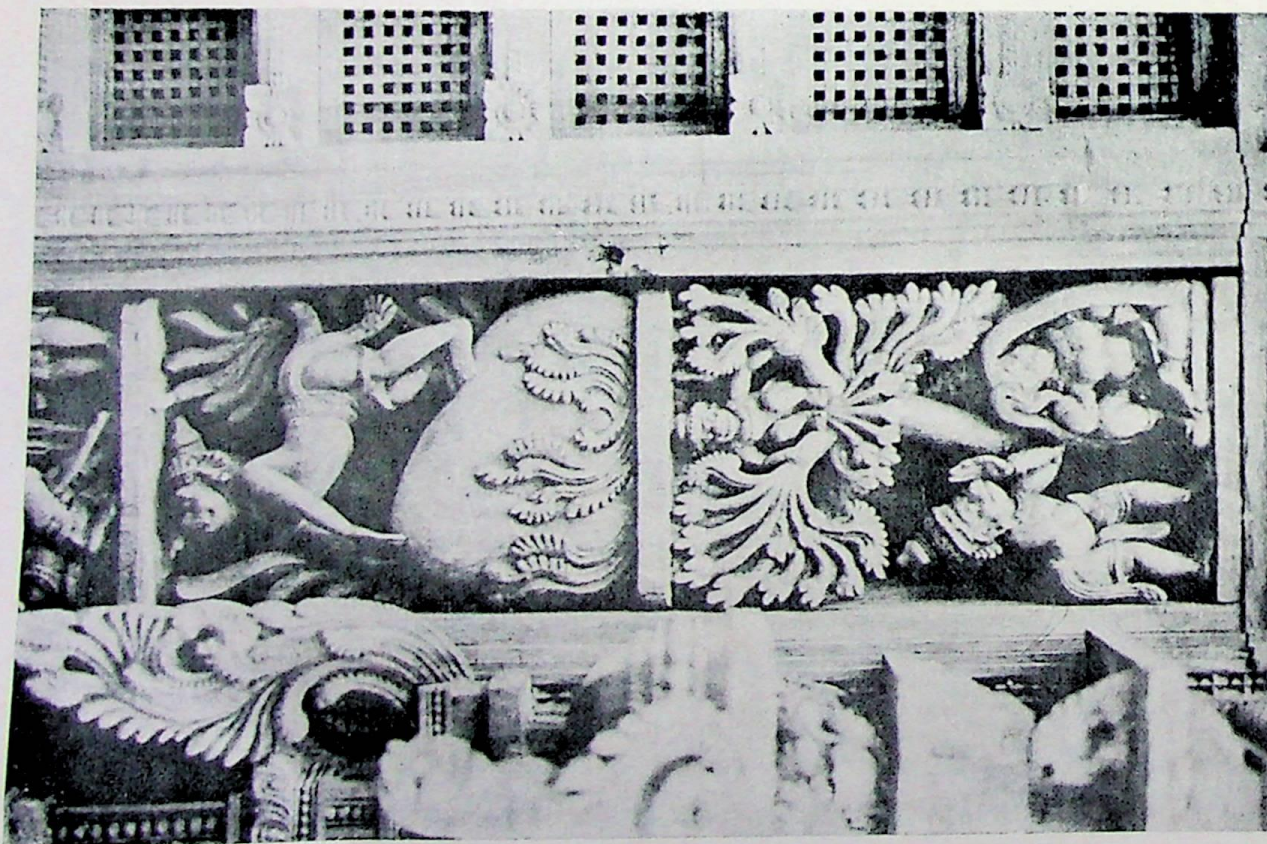



PLATE 175—*Rāmāyaṇa* scenes, Chengannur.

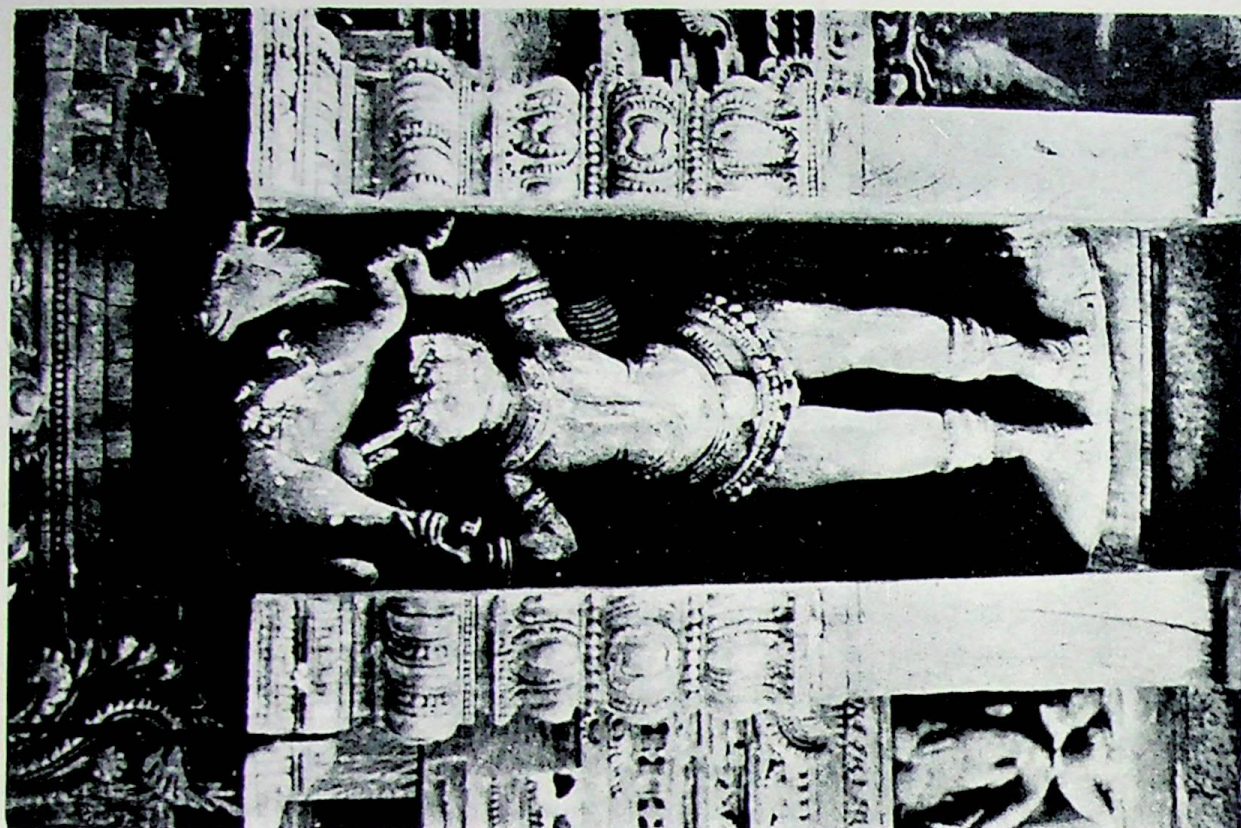



PLATE 176—Kṛṣṇa with cow, Pulliyur Narasiṃha temple.

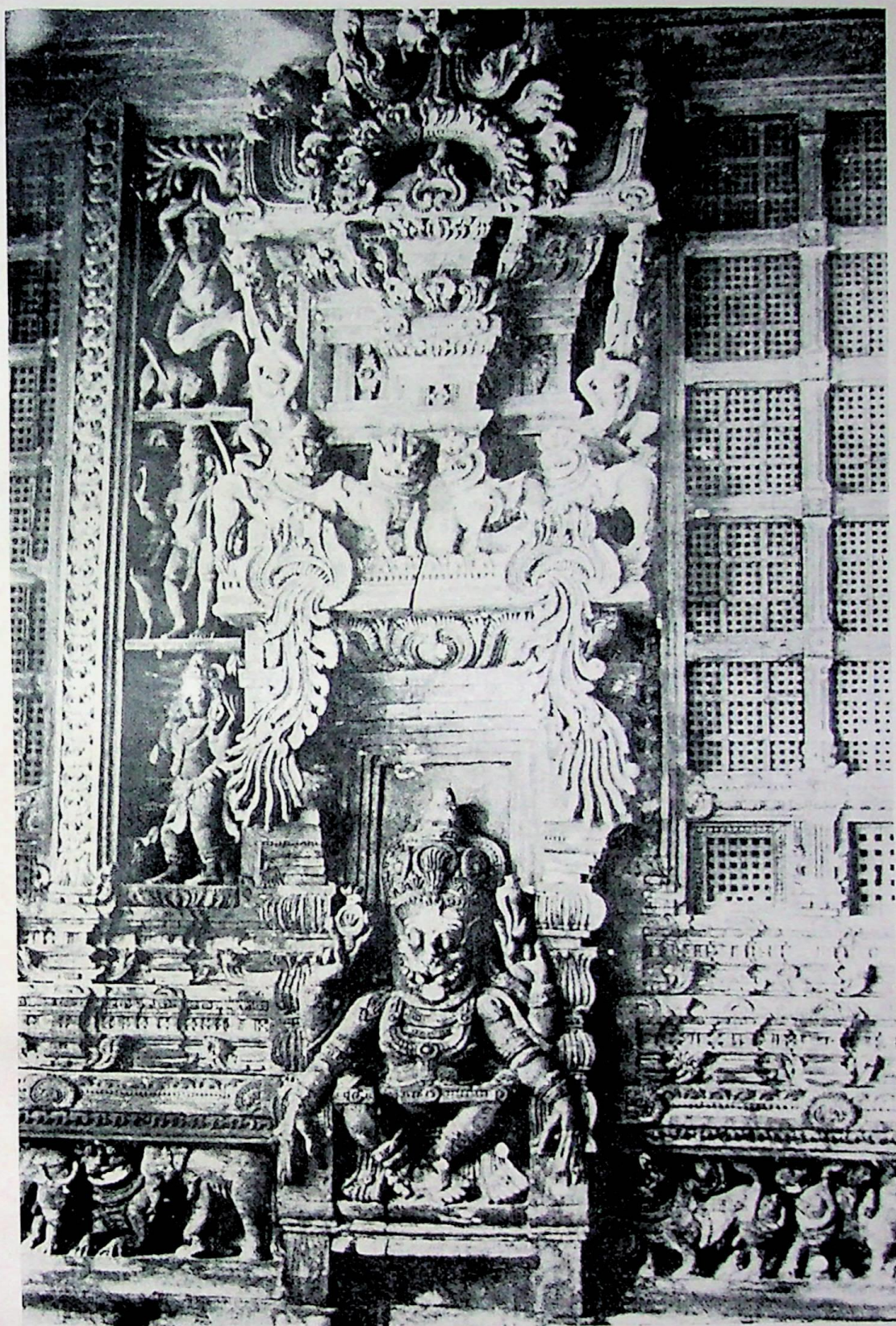



PLATE 177—Narasimha *yogāsana*, Chengannur.

PLATE 178-A—Kathākali model.

PLATE 178-B—Kathākali model.

PLATE 178-C—Kathākali model.

PLATE 178-D—Kathākali model.

(178 A-D *Copyright Trivandrum Museum*)

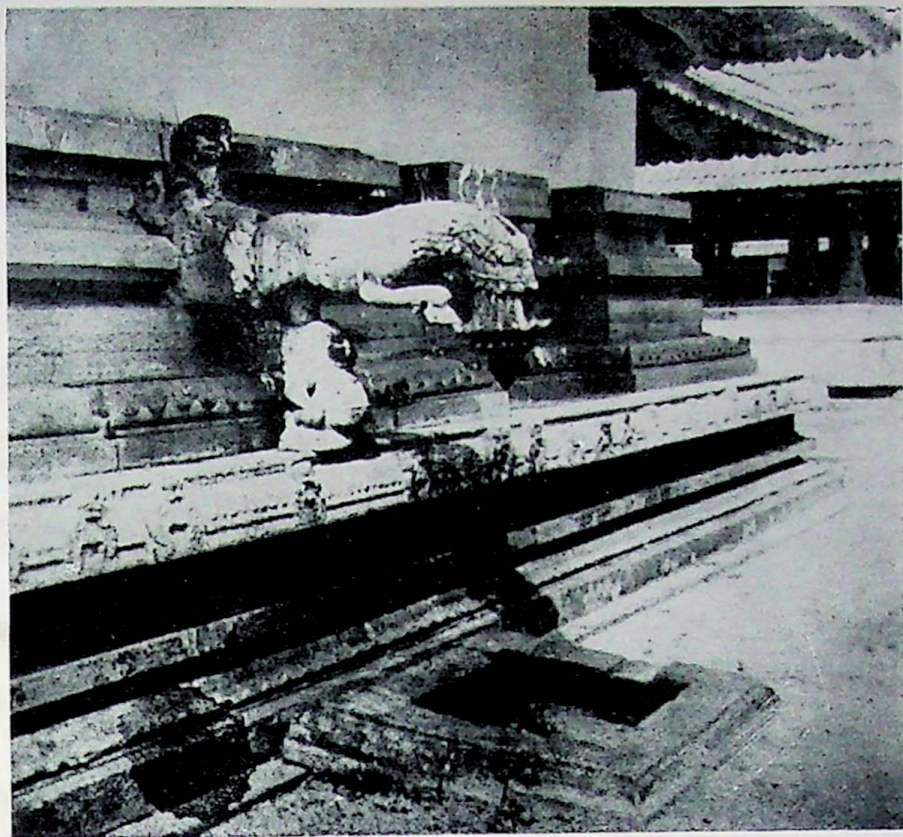



PLATE 179—*Praṇala* of the Rameśvara temple, Quilon District.

PLATE 180—*Namaskāra maṇḍapa*, Rameśvara temple

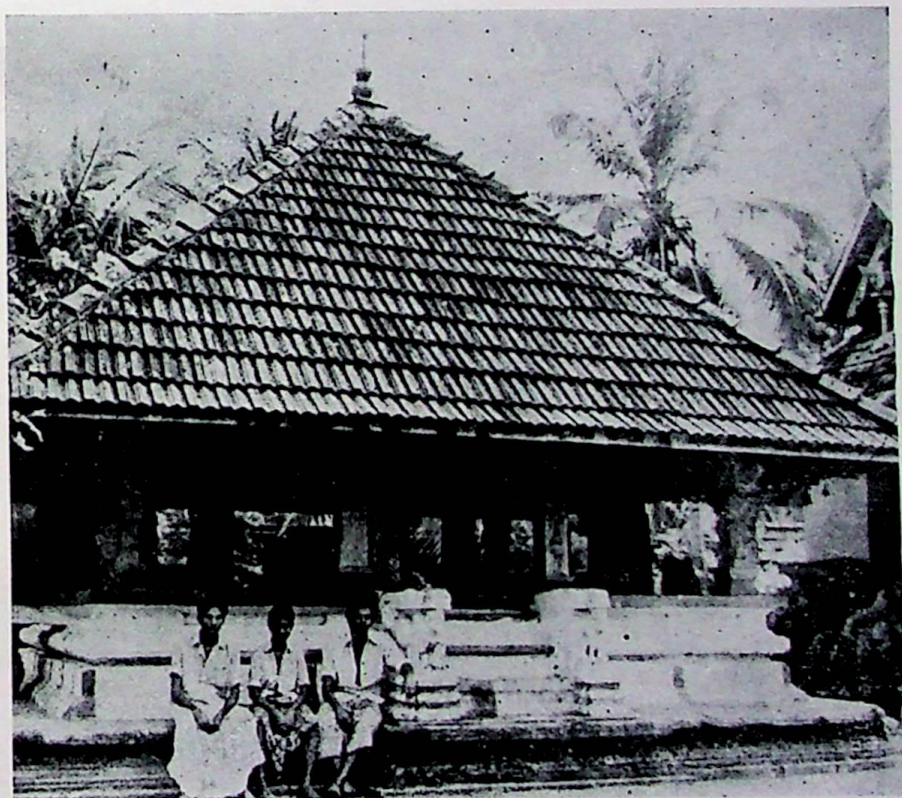
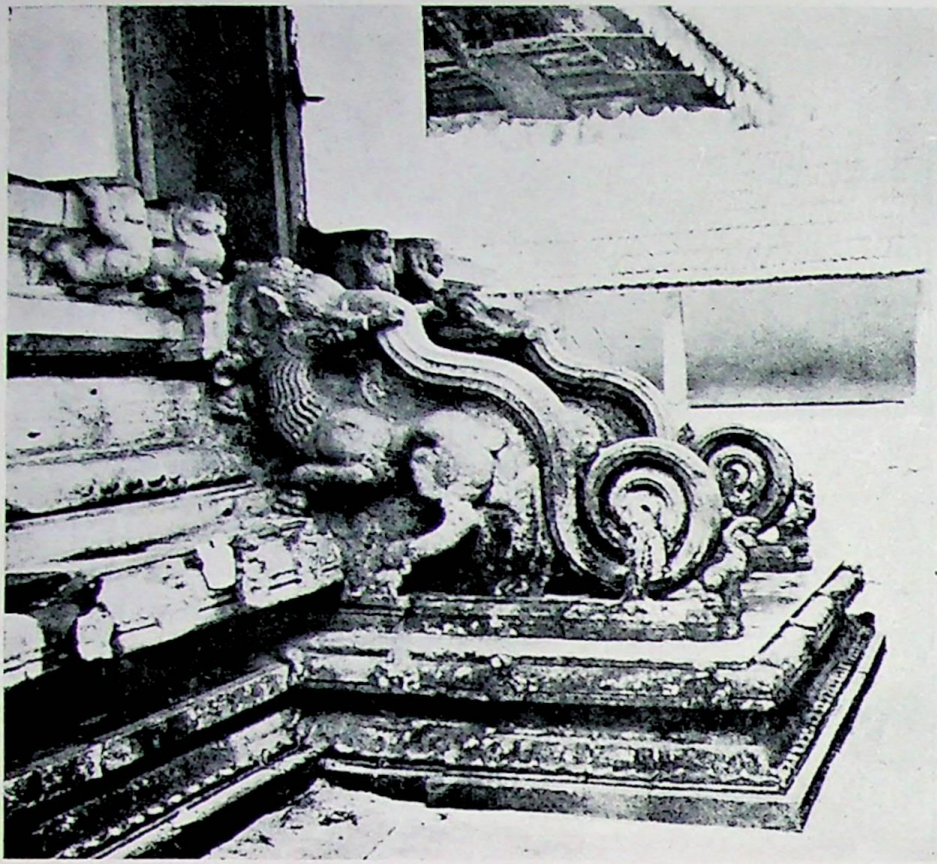



PLATE 181—*Sopana* of Rameśvara temple.

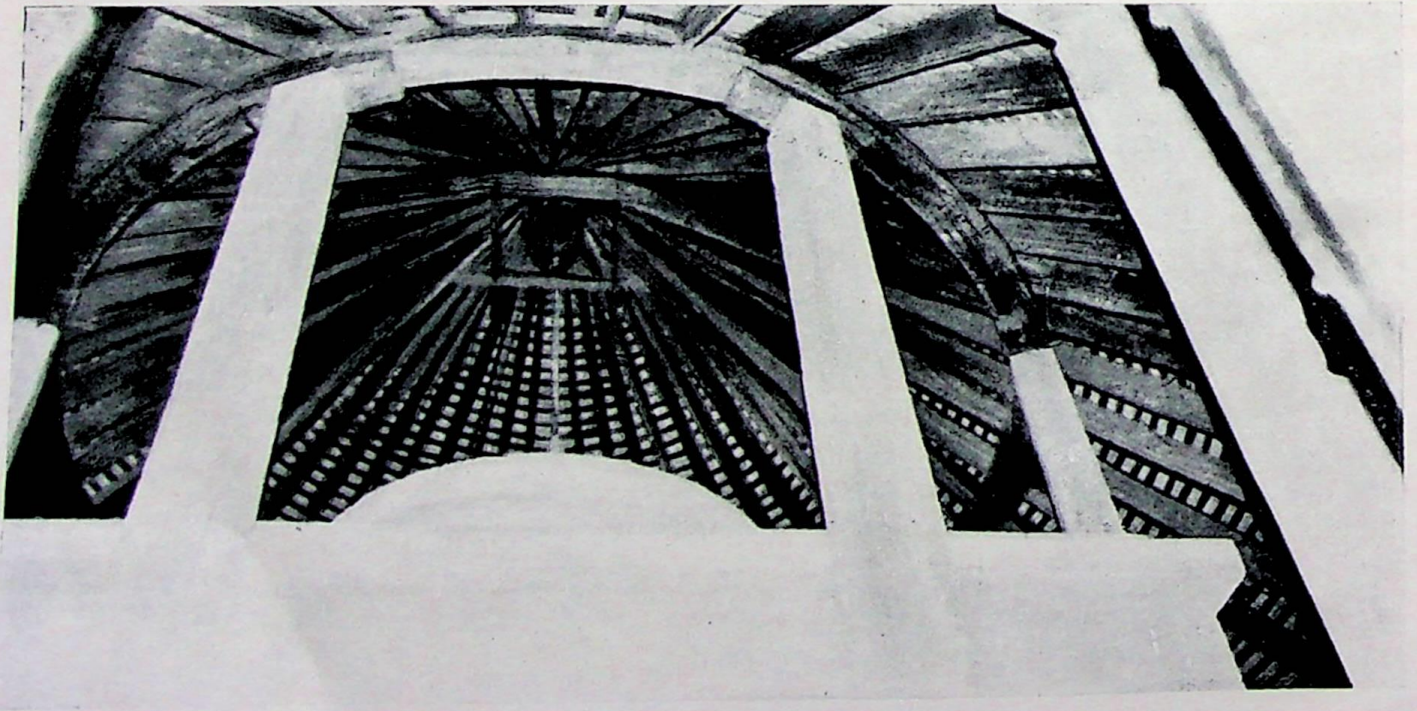



PLATE 182—Interior of the *srikovil* with freestanding *vimāna*, Chittumala Devī at Kallada, Quilon District.

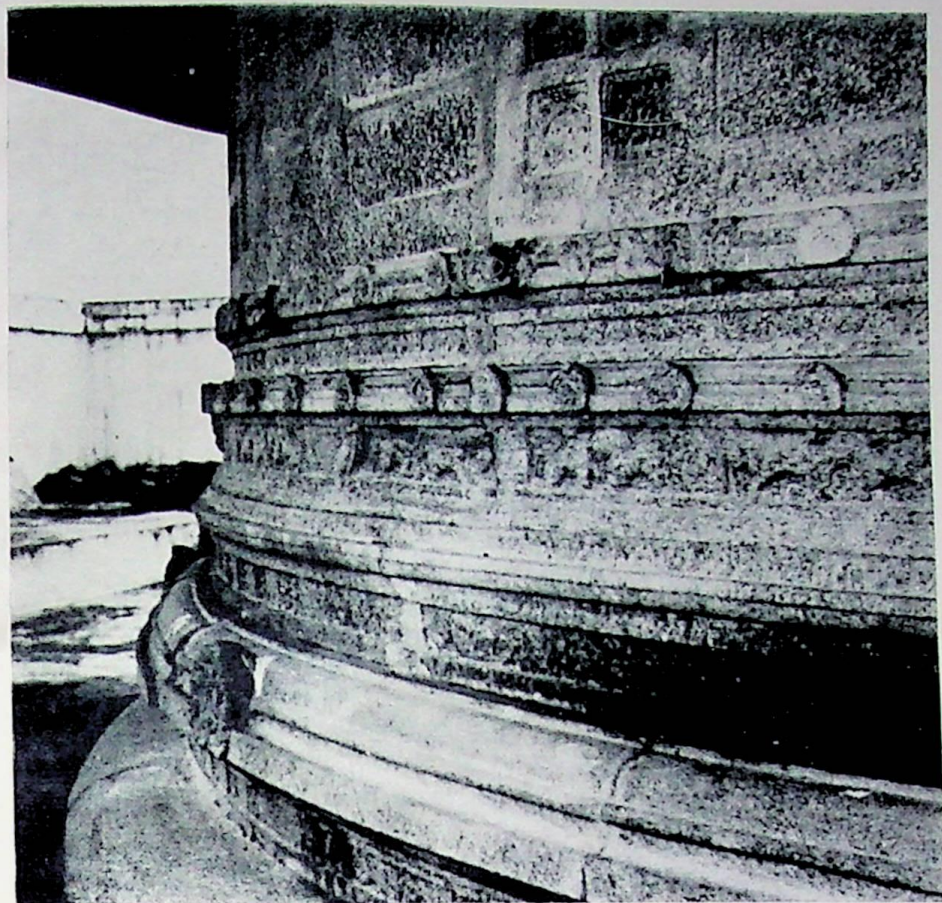



PLATE 183—Base of Chittumala Devī temple.

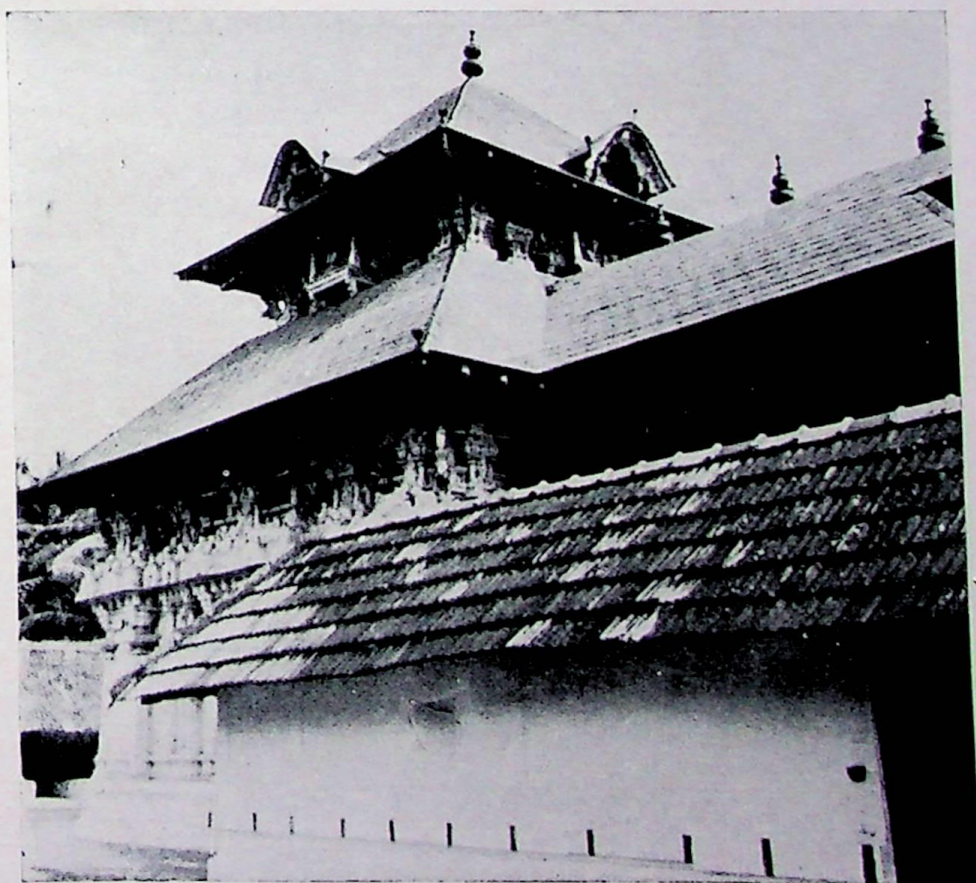



PLATE 184—Temple of Śrī Mahādeva, Kazhakuttam, Trivandrum District.

PLATE 185—Manambur Subrahmaṇya at Varkalla, Trivandrum District.

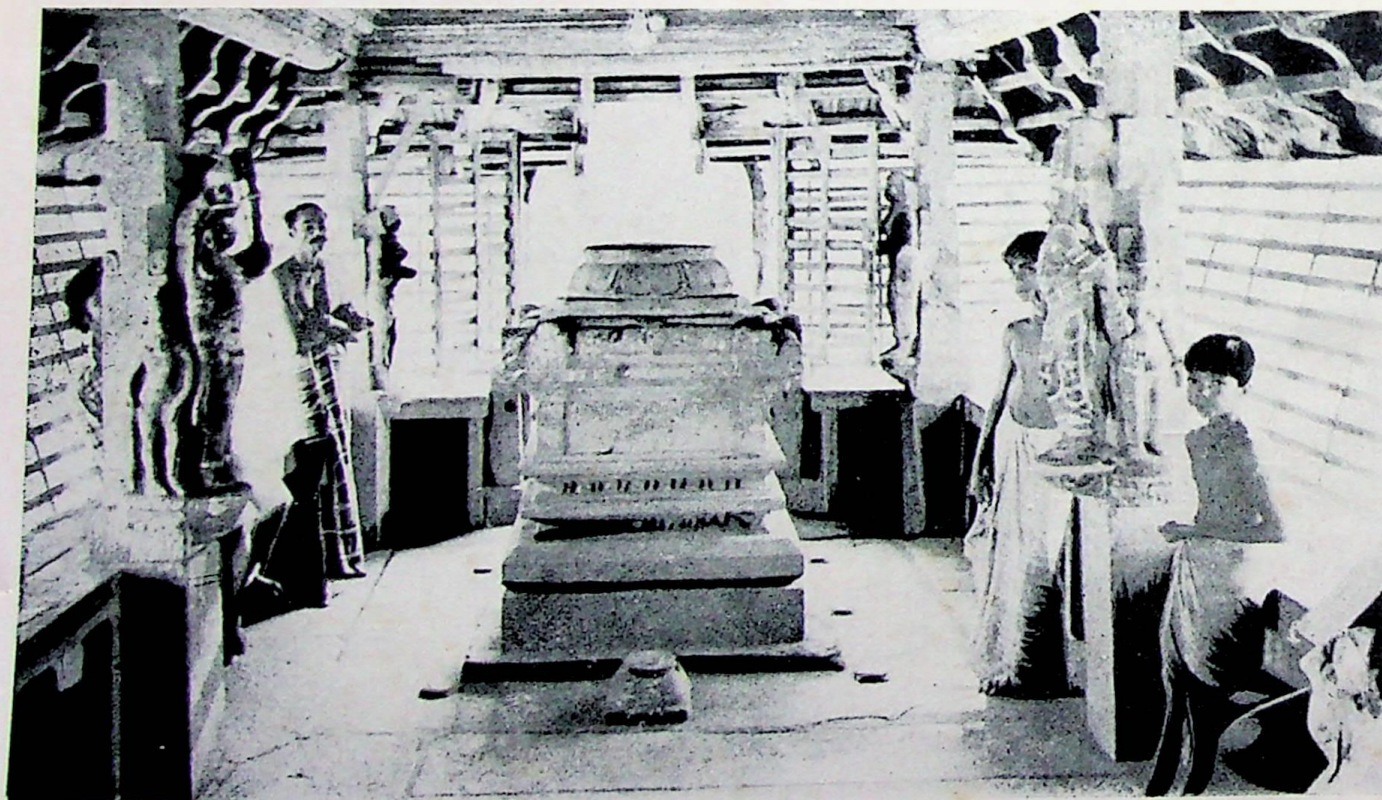



PLATE 186—*Agra maṇḍapa* interior at Varkalla.

PLATE 187—Gable at Varkalla.

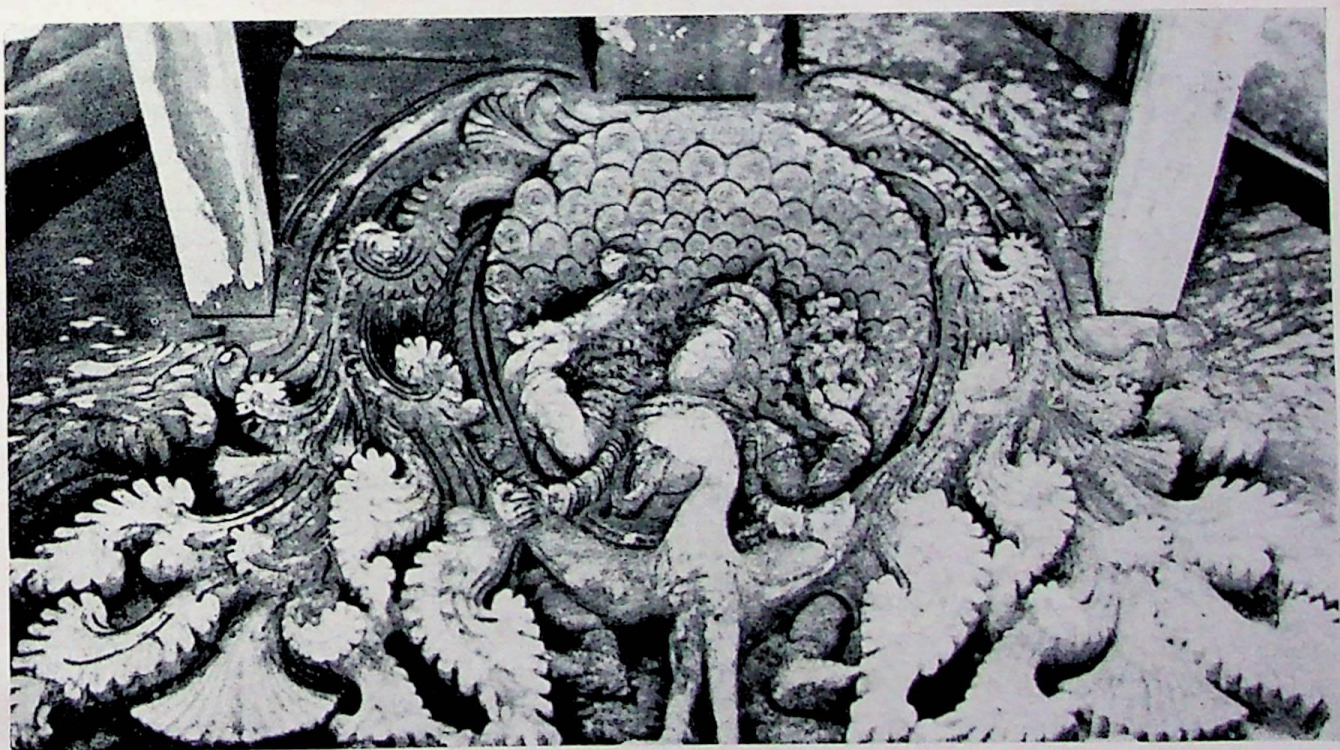



PLATE 188—Subrahmaṇya on lower gable at Varkalla.

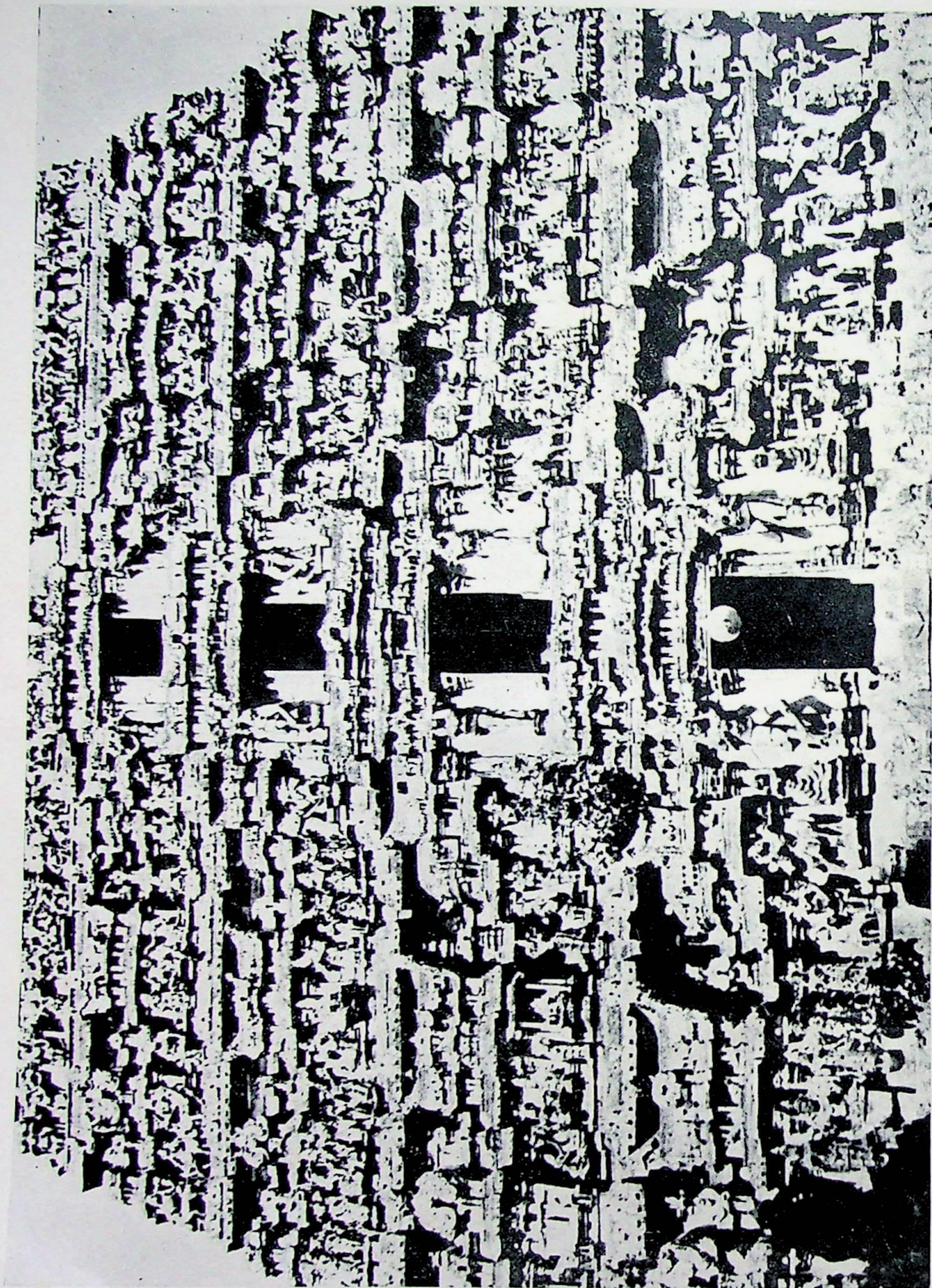



PLATE 189—Tower of Nilakaṇṭhasvāmi near Padmanābhapuram Palace, Kanyakumari District.

PLATE 190—Thirunārāyaṇappuram temple, Trivandrum District.

PLATE 191—*Dvārapāla* detail, Thirunārāyaṇappuram.

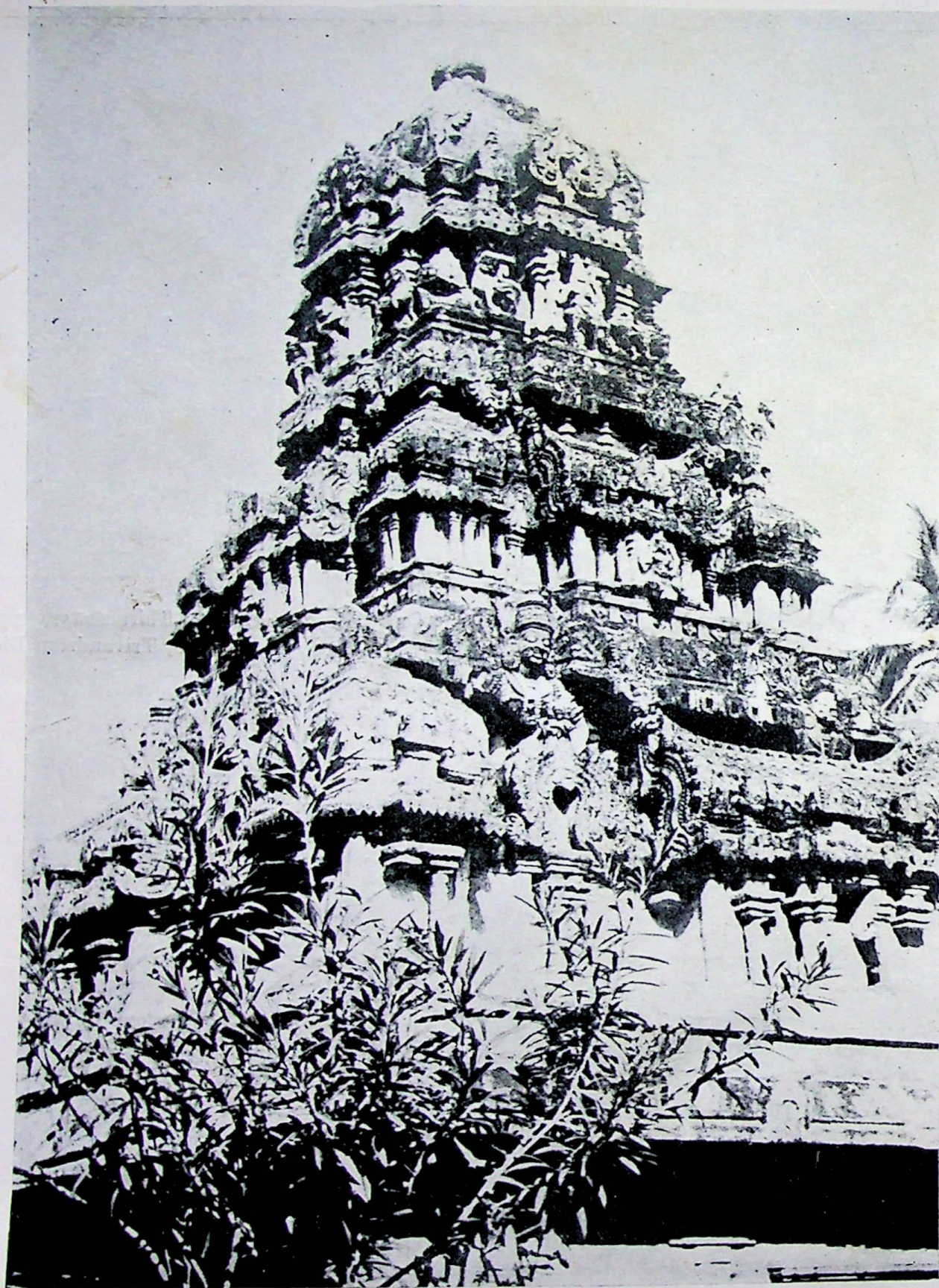



PLATE 192—*Śikhara* of Thirunārāyaṇappuram.